University of Alberta

Targeting Utterances through the Liminal Mist: An Investigation into the Cultural Practices and Worldview of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter

by

Joel Kroeker

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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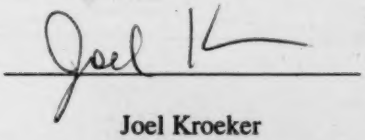

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Targeting Utterances through the Liminal Mist: An Investigation into the Cultural Practices and Worldview of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter by Joel Kroeker in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Dedicated, of course, to Cady.

Not because you will find this work so enthralling, but because your patience and encouragement throughout this process has kept us both sane.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic investigation into the cultural practices and worldview of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter. I address the question of how and why independent Canadian Singer/Songwriters gear their compositional and promotional material to suit perceived institutional expectations of genre, national identity and aesthetic. One of the main roles that government plays in the life of the Singer/Songwriter in Canada is through various music related regulations and cultural initiatives. I deal with this constellation of issues through a brief account of broadcasting and media in the Canadian music industry and its relationship to the establishment of Canadian Content regulations and other cultural initiatives that purport to aid the emerging Canadian artist. As a method of understanding and comparing the success of these aids I include various comments made by Singer/Songwriters on this topic.

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an ethnographic investigation into the cultural practices and worldview of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter. I address the question of how and why do independent Canadian Singer/Songwriters gear their compositional and promotional material to suit perceived institutional expectations of genre, national identity and aesthetic. One of the main roles that government plays in the life of the Singer/Songwriter in Canada is through various music related regulations and cultural initiatives. These regulations and initiatives contribute to create a situation in Canada that is distinct from its American counterpart, thus revealing an interesting constellation of issues regarding the practices and perceptions of the Canadian Singer/Songwriter. I deal with this constellation of issues through a brief account of broadcasting and media in the Canadian music industry and its relationship to the establishment of Canadian Content regulations and other cultural initiatives that purport to aid the emerging Canadian artist. As a barometer of the success of these aids I include various comments made by Singer/Songwriters and other industry professionals on this topic.

Folk and various other categories of music are presently in a state of **liminality** where their borders are being re-defined and their membership is ambiguous. (Note: the use of bold type indicates the presence of a word in the glossary) This liminality allows Singer/Songwriter participants in the umbrella category called Folk to borrow from other related (and seemingly non-related) genres in order to broaden their appeal to a larger and more diverse audience while maintaining their categorical identity as "Singer/Songwriters" (Negus 1996: 146).

Therefore, this thesis is also a genre study as I attempt to investigate how Singer/Songwriters are able to base themselves within the genre of folk while freely crossing genre barriers and how this freedom benefits them.

At present in Canada, the Singer/Songwriter category is not easily positioned as uniquely Folk or Pop, presenting a site of societal tension. This tension is created in part by a commercialized culture attempting to escape commodification through a nostalgic quest for an imagined "authentic community". That is, folk music is often promoted and perceived to be one of the last bastions of non-commercialized "authentic" music harkening back to a time when cultural practices were less commodified. Therefore, Singer/Songwriters are sometimes able to reach a target audience by displaying certain kinds of images on their promotional material and using certain buzzwords and phrases in interviews and on promotional "bios". The nostalgic quest for "authenticity" is played out by consumer spending habits but it is also displayed in the promotional and compositional activities of the musicians themselves as they strive toward a particular genre identification (Strinati 1995: 43). This issue of genre becomes more complex as boundaries between genres become more and more blurred, which is due in part to the fracturing of genres into a plethora of subcategories. The liminality of the modern Singer/Songwriter allows him/her to travel back and forth between various genre categories while maintaining the overarching title "Singer/Songwriter" with many of its various associative meanings still attached. The Singer/Songwriter does not produce a product that can easily be pigeon-holed into a specific genre (as can products by Heavy Metal artists or Rap artists for example). That is, in the Singer/Songwriter's case, it seems that the artist

becomes the genre itself, rather than his product *signalling* the genre. The fact that they are doing what they do within the context that surrounds them constitutes their Singer/Songwriter affiliation. The genre is defined by a category of performer rather than by specific musical attributes. In the case of the Singer/Songwriter the genre is focussed on the person not the product.

The geographical area that I have chosen for my informant base is Western Canada (everything west of, and including Winnipeg), focussing mainly on Edmonton and Alberta. I am limiting my study to Western Canadian Singer/Songwriters and more particularly those who work within the Edmonton and surrounding area since that is where I live and do most of my work as a professional Singer/Songwriter. The Singer/Songwriters I am including in my study range from semi-professional musicians to fully professional musicians who make the majority of their living from performance. I have an interest in this informant base because I am a professional Singer/Songwriter who has been performing in Canada for the past decade and I consider myself part of this community. Therefore, my study will take on the form of an emic investigation of the world in which I work as a musician, as opposed to a sustained theoretical argument (Seeger 1992: 104).

This emic orientation will benefit my research in a number of ways. First, it allows me to have access to important players within the "scene" thus revealing a "behind the scenes" look at the music business and its participants. Many of the interviews were done at festivals and concerts where my performers pass gave me access to the "Green Room" where the musicians hang out between sets. Secondly, I speak the "language", which allows me to immediately understand important

communicative cues that might otherwise be shrouded in insider lingo. Finally, I am able to compare and contrast the information that I receive from informants with my own experiences within the industry thus adding a "third dimension" to my research.

The study of a site of generic contest between folk (as the "authentic" article) and pop (the commodified and mass produced article) is significant in that it can reveal a commonly held worldview that appears to be prevelant within Canadian (and North American) society and thus is relied upon by the music industry as a selling point (Fornas 1990: 292). This worldview (as mentioned above) is the nostalgic longing for an imagined "authentic community".

In the North American pop industry this longing appears to be fulfilled by the celebration of the independence of an artist. That is, independence from the financial backing of a large corporation such as a **major recording label** (e.g. Warner) appears to give the artist credibility as an independent thinker and an "authentic" artist who is not only "in it for the money". This independence is often perceived as "authenticity" and purity within the artist's expression. The North American music industry has responded to the wide-scale acceptance of "indie" artists by incorporating, or "buying out", "indie" (Independent) labels which thus function as proving grounds for unknown artists. Meanwhile, the majority of North American audiences remain unaware of this relationship between indies and majors and thus continue to wholly support the **indie labels** (i.e. – small record labels that are perceived as being independent from the major labels regarding artist acquisition and promotion) and their roster of so-called "independent" artists as if they were still unconnected to major labels (Lee 1995: 1).

In the North American folk world this nostalgic longing for an imagined "authentic (and uncommodified) community" appears to be fulfilled by a self-conscious alignment with a real or imagined past and a focus on traditional elements which are expressed through musical material, promotional material, and all other expressions of genre. These expressions become standardized as they are incorporated and replicated by the promotional "machines" within the music industry and are then reflected back by semi-professional musicians who are working to promote their own solo musical careers. This system of activity is particularly salient within the Singer/Songwriter genre as it is made up mainly of musicians who promote themselves and their solo career, thus presenting a seemingly "pure" representation of their own personal image as opposed to an image which has been altered at various levels as it passes through the hierarchy of a major label **A&R department** (Shuker 1998: 134).

WHAT IS A SINGER/SONGWRITER?

According to Roy Shuker the term Singer/Songwriter is given to artists who both write and perform their own material, and who are able to perform solo, usually on acoustic guitar or piano. This includes international artists such as Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, and Joan Baez. In Canada, renowned artists such as Bruce Cockburn, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Sarah Mclachlan have been accorded this title.

In spite of general definitions of the Singer/Songwriter, such as Shuker's, this term remains somewhat ambiguous and ill defined. Within my study there are two

definitional forces at work in regard to the identity of the Singer/Songwriter. First, the term "Singer/Songwriter" is an ethnographic term. There is an ethnographic boundary around this term that has developed over time through social practices, musical practices and general discourse on the subject. This is the Singer/Songwriter as he or she exists in "the real world". Secondly, since I am an active professional Singer/Songwriter, I am analyzing and reflecting on the generated data as well as my own experiences and then attempting to contribute to the defining process as I construct the Singer/Songwriter through my discourse. This distinction is significant as it reveals the self-constructing aspect of my work.

This term (Singer/Songwriter) is traditionally considered as a sub-genre to the larger category known as "folk". The term "folk music" has very little consistent meaning in its modern usage. Where it once referred to largely non-commercialized, acoustic, improvised, village music that was passed from person to person without being written down, "folk music" is now commonly used by the general public to refer to almost any form of popular music that is based on the use of acoustic instruments, including "mainstream" forms such as country, acoustic rock, and acoustic **"new-age"/world** (Shuker 1998: 276).

In the 1960's folk music in North America took on the association of having a socio-political nature, giving rise to an activism within the North American popular music community. During this time period, folk music was distinguishable from other forms of popular music by the fact that it attempted to "make a statement" about some relevant contemporary issue, while "pop" music appeared to be more concerned with commercializing tendencies (Jennings 1997: 8). This dichotomizing principle

has become blurred in recent times since recently produced folk and pop music (within the last two decades) are similarly commercialized and lacking in blatant socio-political sentiment (e.g. Celtic music).

Canada has gained a reputation in the last half of the 20th century as being a prolific producer of Singer/Songwriters. This is evidenced in international media where various comments refer to Canada's ability to produce many musicians of this sort. For example, Katherine Dieckman, writing on Canadian music in the New York *Village Voice*, suggested that Singer/Songwriters and particularly "moody girl singers grow on trees up there" (Dieckman 1994: 32). This sort of comment suggests a perception of Canada as fertile ground for Singer/Songwriter activity and thus Canada is a relevant starting point for this present research.

Within my informant base there is a range of different types of Singer/Songwriters including high profile international artists such as Stephen Fearing (on the True North record label), semi-professional artists such as Paul Bellous who do not make their living from performance, and avant-garde artists such as Veda Hille who also do a vast range of non-Singer/Songwriter-oriented projects including film and classical composition.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I have conceptualized my project according to a certain dialogism, in particular the shaping of one's utterance according to assumed expectations. More specifically, I have studied how the promotional activity and personal perspective (regarding image,

songwriting, and aspects of the music business) of Western Canadian Singer/Songwriters are subject to assumptions about institutional expectations. These assumptions have been learned, in part, through the artist's consumption of pop culture products and ideology. Institutional media such as radio, television, print media and retail companies play an important role in codifying and presenting popular ideology. Therefore my study includes an in-depth look into the practices of media institutions in Canada. Most relevant to my study, and thus a major focus, is the system of radio broadcasting in Canada and the establishment of Canadian Content Regulations.

Central issues will include how Singer/Songwriters gear their material to suit format and content regulations (such as the CRTC's Canadian content regulations since 1976) and the regulations and motivations within non-commercial governmental cultural initiatives in Canada (such as the **Canada Council, FACTOR, SOCAN, AFA, MARIA**).

As Waterman suggests regarding his study of Juju music, my interest is not only *the music* itself but mainly "historically situated human subjects who perceive, learn, interpret, evaluate, produce and respond" to music, the media and the perceived institutional expectations of them (Waterman 1990: 56). In order to limit and more clearly describe the complex of activities that take place within this community I will incorporate Will Straw's notion of "**Scene**" as "that cultural [and territorial] space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (Straw 1991: 373). However, as Mark Olsen has pointed out, these scenes are not simply "empty vessels" having seemingly no effect

on the practices which they "contain" (Olsen 1998: 34). This containment produces a territorializing effect which is sensed by the participants within the "scene" resulting in a sense of community as well as a struggle to connect with other "scenes" via various methods such as Internet activity and physical touring. In spite of this territorializing tendency there also exists the opposite move toward globalization resulting in a slippery, nonlocalized quality within a geographical scene such as the Edmonton Singer/Songwriter scene (Olsen: 1998).

In an investigation of a regional "scene" such as the one found in the Edmonton area, it is important to more fully define the term "scene". Will Straw (1991) and Lawrence Grossberg (1994) have both theorized the "scene" as being distinguishable from the practices that take place within it (Straw 1991: 373). Grossberg takes this notion further than Straw suggesting that scenes are characterized by a particular logic and are able to remain durable in spite of the continual reconfiguration of the musical practices that take place across them (Olsen 1998: 271). Thornton agrees with this notion of the separation between the scene and its participants and warns against the tendency to "conflate the scene with community" (Thornton 1996). Grossberg states that "this also means that very different musics may exist in very similar scenes" (Grossberg 1994: 46). In the case of my study this is a relevant notion regarding the perceived differences between the Edmonton and the Calgary "scenes". However, it is important not to conflate "scene" with "place". A scene implies place but is not *just* a place. Scene also refers to activities and players that move *between* different communities (e.g. players moving from Winnipeg to Edmonton and touring through Vancouver), or *across* communities

(e.g. "the rave scene" or "the techno scene"). There are different levels within an identifiable scene as defined by the term's usage in the media or in general discourse. For example, "the Canadian music scene" is an amalgam of many smaller more regional scenes, while "the Edmonton scene" is an amalgam of many smaller sub-cultural scenes (such as "the rave scene" or "the techno scene"). In spite of the term's diverse usage it is useful in the context of my research as it efficiently refers to a large range of activities and players.

Due to the cross-fertilization between scenes there occurs much trading of musical and aesthetic resources resulting in what Appadurai terms "**post-blurred genres**" (Appadurai 1996: 51 and Geertz 1975: 76). Appadurai defines this post-blurring as "a state after which genre categories no longer hold well defined and easily observable boundaries due to their appropriation and double entendre". In the case of my study this post-blurring effect is particularly noticeable when one looks at the self-promotional aspects of Singer/Songwriters as they attempt to reflect their genre identity through posters, interviews and various media. Reading the promotional cues presented by the artist (such as **semiotic** visual cues on a poster or genre buzzwords in an interview) often requires insider information thus signaling a target audience. The relatively recent proliferation and fracturing of genres into sub-genres has made this process more complex resulting in a "post-blurred" state where many commonly held associations have become ambiguous and are no longer held in common.

Finally, I will borrow Silverstein's conception of "**meta-pragmatic framing devices**" (as described by Ingrid Monson: 1996) to show how Singer/Songwriters'

seemingly eclectic and diverse influences and outputs are contextually "framed", perceived and understood as a coherent whole and how the intelligibility of Singer/Songwriters' musical discourse (including stage talk, posture, and other forms of communication) is context-dependent.

SITUATING THE PROJECT WITHIN THE LITERATURE

Although ethnographies of popular musicians have been written in the past, such as those by Cohen (1991), Finnegan (1989) and Monson (1996), my project is unique in its focus on genre identity as a differentiating characteristic and its relationship to perceived Canadian institutional expectations within Western Canadian music "scenes". It is also unique in its focus on folk musicians (and particularly Singer/Songwriters), investigating mainly what Cohen calls "the countless, as yet unknown (artists) struggling for success at the local level" (Cohen 1993: 6).

RELATED STUDIES

My study fits into popular music studies of a particular music scene such as Guilbault's Zouk study (1993). Kruse's subcultural identity study (1993) and Bjornberg and Stockfelt's work on Danish pub music deal mainly with the geographic popularization of specific genres, along with local music scenes while other works such as Becker's (1997) work on jazz and Bennet's "The Realities of Practice" (1990) deal with the process of music-making and becoming a musician.

Regarding academic texts on the topic of popular music and theory I have benefited from Dominic Strinati's "An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture" and Keith Negus' "Popular Music in Theory" as they give valuable background to the world in which the Singer/Songwriter acts. For similar work with more of a Canadian focus I have looked at Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer's "Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity" which contains many articles on Canadian folk and popular music.

Non-academic biographies such as Michael Gray's "The Art of Bob Dylan" (1981) and Shapiro & Glebbeek's "Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy" (1990) have been helpful in giving a sense of individual musicians' perspectives on their situation as musicians. These biographies also tend to give a general cross-section of the musical culture that surrounds these artists, regarding audience perception, promotional attempts, and image creation. For more of a Canadian focus I read Dave Bidini's "On a Cold Road: Tales of Adventure in Canadian Rock" and Nicholas Jennings' "Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound". Other examples of literature with a Canadian Singer/Songwriter focus include Adria's "Music of Our Times: Eight Canadian Singer/Songwriters" (1990), Nadel's "Leonard Cohen: A Life in Art" (1994), and Melhuish's work on Canadian pop music (1983 and 1996), all of which present historical summaries of a developing Canadian popular music scene in biographical and auto-biographical formats.

Finally, there also exist trade journals, both national and international, such as The Record, Chart Magazine, and Billboard Magazine which report regularly on the Canadian music scene giving insight into the topics identified within my study. The

majority of this type of work, including biographical summaries, tends to focus on a consumer vantage point resulting in a celebration of stardom and personalities of fame. My study is unique in that its focus is mainly on systems within the Canadian music industry and how amateur as well as professional Singer/Songwriters develop and maintain agency while working within this complex of systems.

METHODOLOGY

My methodology is based upon my background in the fields of Musicology, Ethnomusicology and Popular Music Studies and takes on the form of an ethnographic account consisting of two significant activities. First, because of my participation in the Western Canadian popular music community, I have unique access to important players in "the scene"; therefore, I include interviews and participant observation in the field with Singer/Songwriters and industry professionals including Stephen Fearing (Singer/Songwriter), Veda Hille (Singer/Songwriter), Ford Pier (Singer/Songwriter), Ben Sures (Singer/Songwriter), Paul Bellous (Singer/Songwriter), Dale Ladouceur (Singer/Songwriter), Rick Unruh (Singer/Songwriter). Larry LeBlanc (Billboard Magazine), Holger Peterson (Stony Plain Records), Kathy Kirby (Sidetrack Café), Audrey Greenough (EZRock), Brian Tamke (DMX Digital Music Express), Gabino Travassos (Mote), and Scott Lingley (SEE Magazine). I have included non-performing industry professionals because their perspectives provide an alternative and sometimes contrasting view to the seemingly consistent responses of Singer/Songwriters thus providing a larger and more realistic scope for my investigation. I have also

included comments from informants who wish to remain anonymous. For these references I have included a pseudonym to replace the informant's real name.

Secondly, I will include excerpts from selected commercial media culture, including journalistic criticism and liner notes, in order to help describe the complex relationship between active music-makers and the non-musical professionals within the industry and how this relationship contributes to Singer/Songwriters' identity formation.

Successful musical and ethnographic research includes and respects the voice of all of the informants. Therefore, the interviews appear in my study through direct quotation in order to make a space for their opinions and views that is reasonably unencumbered with translation and paraphrase. This use of direct quotation is done as an acknowledgement of Clifford's warning against ethnographic searches for "authoritative" interpretations and Briggs' concept of "metacommunicative norms" conflicting with the expectations of the researcher (Clifford 1983: 118). My awareness of these issues of power and bias have led me to rely more heavily upon musicians' observations about their own musical processes to guide my research.

Harris Berger has aptly stated that "Ethnomusicology extends across the entire reach of experience, from the minutest micro-constitution of the temporality of sound phenomena to the broadest historical cross-situational trains of events, grasped in reflection and consequential for practice" (Berger 1999:297). Due to this vast range of activity and experience, the methods of ethnography are helpful in that they allow a certain degree of openness and space that may not always exist in other more well-established research disciplines thus allowing new discoveries that were not expected or intended when the project began. This open-ness (in regard to research methods) can

allow for the one doing the research to be transformed by the processes he/she undergoes while doing the research. This may be due in part to the emphasis within ethnographic pursuits on cultural sensitivity or possibly to the fact that ethnographic research is largely empirical in nature as opposed to being rigidly systematic and exact. Within my study I have found this both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that there is a continuous flow of new information to be digested and the open nature of the ethnographic discipline allows me to follow many different trails regardless of where they may lead. It has been a curse in that the ethnographic pursuit is never finished and can be considered highly subjective. It is very difficult to remain a neutral party as the researcher of this sort of study without getting personally involved with the research material, especially when one is studying one's own surrounding "culture".

I chose my interviewees in hopes of getting a broad picture of the everyday practices and perceptions of Singer/Songwriters and related industry participants living in Edmonton and the surrounding area. I tried to display diversity in my interview choices by including semi-professional Singer/Songwriters (such as Paul Bellous), professional Singer/Songwriters (such as Stephen Fearing), media personnel (such as Larry LeBlanc of Billboard Magazine), Record label representatives (such as Holger Peterson of Stony Plain Records), booking agents (such as Kirby), and radio personnel (such as Audrey Greenough of EZRock). Meanwhile, during this research, my own profile as a Singer/Songwriter has been growing rapidly and many of those interviewed have become my peers and colleagues within the music business.

There is always a possibility for one's results to be skewed by their choice of informants or their research methods, but in my case all attempts were made to allow

the informants full freedom to speak freely on the subject at hand with minimal guidance from the researcher. Interviews were recorded and thus all quotes are word-for-word with no paraphrase. Follow-up calls were made for clarification on specific points. Another potential weakness of this sort of research is that it can be perceived as being too general in nature. This is especially the case with the present research topic since it is largely geographically based and there is almost no previous research done on this topic. The geographically based nature of this research can lead to generalities that are not necessarily directly applicable to other locales. However, these generalities within early research can provide direction for future study on this topic. For example, the research model that I have developed here to study the Edmonton area could be used for future comparisons to other geographical sites such as Toronto or Eastern Canada.

Chapter 2
THE WESTERN CANADIAN SINGER/SONGWRITER

There is a liminal aspect to the Singer/Songwriter (as mentioned in chapter 1) regarding genre, geography and image/promotion. This liminality results in a situation where the identity of the Singer/Songwriter is largely defined and interpreted according to his or her surrounding context. Therefore, before focusing in on the actual character of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter, it is necessary to set the stage by defining some of the parameters of the sphere of action within which the Singer/Songwriter works. In order to set a context for discussing the situation of the Singer/Songwriter in Western Canada I will be incorporating information gathered from the surrounding Edmonton music scene (my home base during this writing) as a case study. Within a study based on a specific geographical location (i.e. Edmonton and the surrounding area) it is important to take into account the unique aspects of the Edmonton Singer/Songwriter "scene" as they lead one to better understand its role in the larger Canadian music industry. Due to the fluidity of the Singer/Songwriter's scene activity (i.e. touring, traveling and changing home base) I also include information and examples from other surrounding locales such as Winnipeg and Northern Alberta. In this chapter I define "the scene" as a concept and then I use that concept as a template upon which the Singer/Songwriter's situation can be more clearly formulated. Included in this chapter is a discussion of venue as genre with the Folk Festival, the House Concert and Funding Agency genre categories as case studies.

THE EDMONTON "SCENE"

Canada's harsh climates and vast geography make it one of the most grueling places for artists to tour in the Western world. In Western Canada, Edmonton and Calgary are the largest urban centres between Winnipeg and Vancouver and are thus visited by most of the touring acts who are travelling across western Canada. This is beneficial to the Edmonton music scene since it ensures that a relatively constant stream of diverse live performance is available to its audiences and to its musicians. For audiences this means that they are introduced to a wide variety of musical styles which allow local musicians more stylistic freedom as diverse genre markets such as new country, world beat, fusion and "free" are opened and maintained within the city.

On a national level Alberta is known as a home for country and **alt** (alternative) **country** artists such as Paul Brandt and k.d.lang as well as for **Roots Folk** artists such as many of those found recorded on Stony Plain Records, an Edmonton based Roots record label. This relationship with country music appears to be deeply rooted in the psyche of many Albertans (and non-Albertan Canadians) as it is reinforced through countless media sources. The adherence to an "Albertan" identity became particularly evident when alt country Albertan Singer/Songwriter k.d. lang (a much publicized and adamant vegetarian) made allusions to the negative consequences produced by the beef trade and was publically criticized by proponents of Alberta's large beef industry as well as much of the mainstream Albertan country music industry. Lang's comments resulted in her music being temporarily banned from being played on some Albertan Country radio stations.

Although country and roots music have become touchstones for Albertan identity, there are also many other genres with mini-scenes in the Edmonton area including **rave culture**, pop/rock, and jazz. Singer/Songwriters based in Edmonton are able to interact with and be influenced by many of these diverse styles while creating and maintaining their own identity. However, in spite of their attempts to avoid typical genre roles and labels (ex "the folk cowboy from Alberta") through appropriating stylistic diversity, these Singer/Songwriters are often labeled and judged by their geographical base. There is a certain credibility that comes with one's geographic affiliation according to one's genre. For example, a Singer/Songwriter touring through Edmonton may be billed as "Vancouver's own..." which can add credibility to the artist since Vancouver is a much larger urban centre and thus has a larger and more widely celebrated and nationally powerful music scene. The implication here is that there is much more competition in Vancouver and that an artist who "succeeds" in that market deserves more credibility than an artist in a smaller market such as Edmonton. An Edmontonian touring through Vancouver might actually lose credibility if promoted as "Edmonton's own..." for exactly the same reason. This is probably not the case in "indie" music (e.g. "punk") since the obscurity of one's subcultural affiliation is celebrated within this latter genre. So, this geographic "cred" can be seen as genre-based since the same rules do not apply to folk and punk in this regard.

One reflection of the general ethos of provincial music scenes within Canada can be seen in the provincial recording industry associations that exist in many of the Canadian provinces. For example, within the 1999 ARIA (Alberta Recording

Industry Association) Directory displays 20 advertisements, 6 of which are directly related to country music. Meanwhile, the MARIA (Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association) Directory for 1999 displays 29 advertisements and none of them are related to the country music genre.

As Mark Olsen has pointed out this specificity of genre (i.e. country and roots) within the Edmonton/Alberta scene can tend to "function as the commodified other in opposition to 'authentic' musical community" (Olsen, 1998: 285 footnote #3). That is, music which falls under the category of Country, within Alberta, tends to be some of the most commercially successful product within the Albertan industry and is therefore labeled as being more commodified than other less commercially successful products. Therefore, "Country" becomes associated with "commercial" creating an opposition point to which other less commercially successful expressions can stand in opposition. This system of behaviour may have played a role in the creation of "New Country" led by Albertans such as k.d. lang.

In regard to music scenes that exist in close proximity to each other Grossberg has stated that very different musics may exist in very similar scenes (Grossberg 1994: 46). In the case of my study this is a relevant notion regarding the perceived differences between the Edmonton and the Calgary scenes. When making this comparison Edmonton is often touted as the more "cultural" of the two cities, while Calgary is seen as the more "wealthy" city. In these sorts of comparisons between the two cities' music scenes it can be helpful to view their free "arts and culture" weeklies as barometers of the scene's "flavour". In Edmonton these weeklies are SEE and VUE magazine and in Calgary they are the Calgary Straight and FFWD magazine.

For example, in comparing their "Music Listings" sections for Feb.28-Mar.2, 2000 the Calgary papers listed 29 "live music" venues, while the Edmonton papers listed 80. SEE magazine (Edmonton) also listed 27 weekly open stages while the Calgary papers listed none.

In many ways the "arts and culture" weeklies from Calgary and Edmonton reveal striking similarities between the two scenes. A main reason for this is that they share much of the same roster of artists. This is due in part to the fact that Edmonton artists often play in Calgary and vice-versa, but also to the fact that these two cities share many touring artists who are passing through. The similarity of content and "logic" that exists between these two scenes may reflect Olsen's point about the ability scenes have to overlap and disregard their geographic referent (Olsen 1998: 275). That is, the "Edmonton scene" may actually overlap into the geographical area known as Calgary, and vice-versa. The reach of scenes' effects do not respect geographic borders (Olsen 1998: 275).

These arts and culture weeklies are important for the Calgary and Edmonton scene since, as Olsen and Grossberg have both suggested, "scenes are marketing and media-constructed entities" (Olsen, 1998: 272). Although scenes can develop in a somewhat natural way through performers activities and the sharing of ideas, scenes are largely maintained and expanded by the work that is done by various media including radio, television, and print media. Due to this constructed-ness and the scene's existence separate from the practices that occur across them I would suggest that a scene is not a single entity but rather, a multiple entity existing in many forms at the same time according to the various local media's construction of them in

various locations across the country. That is, the Edmonton scene may be perceived to exist in one form for an Edmontonian living in Red Deer, while existing in quite a different form for a Winnipegger living in Toronto. This media-constructed-ness is especially applicable to the latter case where one rarely if ever gets to actually experience the scene first hand, thus relying almost completely on the media's account for any judgements or evaluations about that particular scene.

Olsen suggests that "scenes are valuable because they can secure consumption of those commodities identified with a particular scene" (Olsen 1998: 273). Artists who work within high profile internationally marketed scenes such as those found in Seattle (grunge and the Sub-Pop phenomena), Chapel Hill (Indie), and Toronto (Sonic Unyon) benefit financially from their surrounding scene because it provides a market angle which helps to sell albums and hype their project. Edmonton artists rarely benefit from this aspect of their surrounding scene. Stony Plain Records has been known to use this angle of homegrown Edmonton pride in the marketing of it's products locally, but rarely is it seen elsewhere within the Edmonton scene as a promotional angle. Artists who are the most successful in the Edmonton scene are ones who have found success elsewhere and who rarely perform within Edmonton. Some examples include the Mike Plume Band (work in Nashville), Feeding Like Butterflies (record in Vancouver), Captain Tractor (tour U.S., New Zealand, etc.), kd lang, and Paul Brandt (international songwriter).

It seems as if the act of touring adds credibility to a band or artist thus instilling some sort of respect or confidence in their abilities among potential audience members. That is, local artists who perform regularly are not considered as

highly prized a commodity and thus are not able to fill a room or maintain high ticket prices while artists from out of town regardless of experience or ability are immediately perceived to be worth more money and effort both from the buyers' end (i.e. they get paid more) as well as the audiences' end (i.e. the audience is willing to pay a higher ticket price).

This may relate in part to the concept of "paying one's dues" within the industry. Artists gain cred within their genre from their peers and onlookers by "working hard" and succeeding. For example, artists who have been working in the music industry for ten or twenty years and have remained committed to a seemingly consistent vision (such as Edmonton Singer/Songwriter Mike McDonald) are generally looked upon by their peers and by the public with more respect than younger artists who have found relatively large success "overnight" due to development contracts from major labels (such as Edmonton Singer/Songwriter Maren Ord on Nettwerk and Capitol and Winnipeg Singer/Songwriter Chantal Kreviazuk on Sony). The latter two cases involve young women with virtually no touring or industry experience, both of whom are now signed to major labels. (For more ethnography on Singer/Songwriters based in Edmonton see "MYSELF AS A SINGER/SONGWRITER CASE STUDY" in Appendix 2)

THE SINGER/SONGWRITER AS "GENRE"

After gaining a better understanding regarding the role of the Singer/Songwriter in the Canadian music industry by taking into account their

activities within the Edmonton "scene", it is useful to focus in on the actual character of the Singer/Songwriter. According to Roy Shuker the term Singer/Songwriter is given to artists who both write and perform their material, and who are able to perform solo, usually on acoustic guitar or piano (Shuker 1998: 277) In Canada, artists such as Bruce Cockburn, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Sarah Mclachlan have been accorded this title. The Singer/Songwriter, as viewed within the present Edmonton scene is a liminal figure. By "liminal" I mean to suggest that they are ambiguous in a number of ways thus allowing them to cross over perceived boundaries without presenting a solidly categorizable entity. This liminality is observable from many angles including genre, professional/semi-professional status, target audience, gig choices, independence vs. "signing a deal", and solo performance vs. the band situation.

The Singer/Songwriter category is an interesting and complex case since it is virtually impossible to separate the individual songwriter from the abstract conceptual genre of "Singer/Songwriter". That is, the Singer/Songwriter category is dialectical such that when one begins to describe its unique characteristics, examples of their opposites arise resulting in a need to clarify one's explanation by employing specific examples of specific artists that prove the rule true. One could trace the traditions which presently active Singer/Songwriters might draw upon including the "Tin Pan Alley" approaches to the songwriting industry and the "factory models" of songwriting in the 1950's and 60's such as the situation in New York's Brill Building, but there also exist new innovative approaches within the Singer/Songwriter's milieu

that involve genre-blending making it difficult to trace to any one tradition (Shuker 1998: 276).

Recently, the music industry in North America has seen a plethora of fractured genres as displayed in the vast amounts of new genre categories found in record store CD bins. For example, terms such as ethnopop, rave, ambient techno and afro-celt have become commonplace. The Singer/Songwriter's situation is a unique one regarding this fracturing in that he/she does not produce CDs that can easily be pigeon-holed into a specific genre. That is, in many cases the artists and their surrounding context generate their genre affiliation, rather than their product signalling the genre (Shuker 1998: 277).

An example of this occurs when a rock/punk performer asks the band to leave the stage and then plays a song alone accompanying his voice with his guitar, or alternately, when a Singer/Songwriter plays a set with a full "rock" band setup. In either case, the live recording of this show would be hard to categorize in regard to genre. In the first case the rock artist would *sound* like a Singer/Songwriter, while the second scenario could be considered a "rock band" situation. The category of Singer/Songwriter is focussed on the person and their behaviour within certain contexts, not only the sound of the product. This latter situation becomes apparent as the Singer/Songwriter acts to formulate their identity through a number of different avenues including promotion, image creation, venue choice, and compositional choices.

Genre is important for the Singer/Songwriter because the system within which she finds herself operates in a way that requires genre categorization. This is due to

the practices of categorizing CDs into record store CD bins. In many cases, in order for a "product" to sell successfully it must have a neatly defined label. Without this label, categorization is ambiguous, which can lead to poor and inconsistent sales on a large scale. The Singer/Songwriter is commonly indexed in the "Folk" bin unless they have managed to gain a great deal of publicity (e.g. Sarah McLachlan), in which case their product is put in the "Pop" bin. Either way they are reasonably easy to find for the novice consumer who enters a record store in hopes of buying their CD. Dominic Strinati suggests that genres are produced according to the criteria of profitability and marketability, and provide what audiences are familiar with. He says,"genres help audiences sort out what they want to see or hear from what they do not" (Strinati 1995: 78). In spite of the fact that there is rarely a CD bin entitled "Singer/Songwriters", this sorting out process can prove beneficial to the Singer/Songwriter as they work to define and articulate their professional identity.

Historically, the Singer/Songwriter category was given mostly to folk artists who accompanied their solo voice with an acoustic instrument. In the 1960's Yorkville scene in Toronto artists such as Joni Mitchell and Ian Tyson were accorded this title. This Yorkville scene developed a reputation as a musical Mecca and a bastion for the folk revival and its ensuing political frame of mind (Jennings 1997: 2). Nicholas Jennings goes so far as to state that the Singer/Songwriter tradition in Canada was born in Yorkville with the likes of Ian and Sylvia and Gordon Lightfoot (Jennings 1997: 4). Therefore, the term Singer/Songwriter came to hold associations that paralleled the folk mentality of the time.

In the 1990's however, the term Singer/Songwriter has come to have a broader meaning as the boundaries between Folk and Pop have become blurred. These blurred boundaries have left the Singer/Songwriter in a position of liminality. Pop artists such as Sarah McLachlan and Jewel are accorded the title of Singer/Songwriter in the media despite the fact that they profess few if any of the ideals and characteristics that the folk artists of the 60's Yorkville scene professed. The most obvious difference lies in their Pop affiliation. That is, the music of McLachlan and Jewel is stored in the "Pop" CD bin at record stores, not the "Folk" bin. This example establishes two things. Firstly, that Singer/Songwriter as a category is no longer exclusive to the folk genre, and secondly, that the genre affiliation of the Singer/Songwriter is largely based upon the choices made by record stores and record labels regarding the placement of CDs in CD bins. That is, the Singer/Songwriter relies on systems of commodification (i.e.- the buying and selling practices of consumers and retailers) for their genre classification. This genre ambiguity contributes to the sense of liminality that the Singer/Songwriter displays.

Due to this complexity of characterization it appears that the distinguishing characteristic that places an artist within the Singer/Songwriter category depends mainly on record store CD bin categorization, audience perceptions and the artist's personal perception of himself. For example, when a band such as The Weakerthan's from Winnipeg, who are often labeled as "**emo**" (i.e. post-grunge, emotionally charged indie pop music), play a show at The Sidetrack Cafe in Edmonton, which is a gathering place for many Singer/Songwriters within the Edmonton scene, and the encore is the lead singer (John Samson) playing a song by himself with his guitar, he

is not suddenly considered a " Singer/Songwriter". This is true in spite of the fact that if someone walked into the Sidetrack during this encore and did not know anything about this band, he/she would surely assume that this performer *was* a Singer/Songwriter since all of the stereotypical elements that define Singer/Songwriter-ness are present, including a solo performer, singing and playing the guitar, singing original, pseudo-political lyrics to a hushed and non-dancing audience in a folk bar. However, the reason Samson is *not* a Singer/Songwriter, even during this very Singer/Songwriter-y moment is because his "fans" do not consider him to be one, he does not consider himself to be one, and he is not marketed as one. He is marketed and accepted as the leader of an original "emo" rock band. His non-Singer/Songwriter-ness is further verified by his history of non-Singer/Songwriter musical experiences in other bands such as the hard-core punk band Propaghandi.

Therefore, not only is it difficult to define the Singer/Songwriter genre in abstract terms without involving specific artists, but it is also difficult to define who falls outside the Singer/Songwriter category without taking into account audience perception and issues of marketing and promotion. This necessary reliance upon audience perception results in a situation where regular genre boundaries can be crossed and blurred according to the artist's ability to appeal to tolerance and preferences. That is, if an artist is well-respected and adored they are allowed more stylistic freedom to behave in ways that are not considered to fall within their genre. This may also be related to the growing acceptability of genre blending.

Some comparisons between modern situations and their historical parallels show that the acceptability of genre blending within Singer/Songwriter scenes

appears to be growing. For example, when Martin Sexton, a Singer/Songwriter from the Eastern United States performed in Edmonton he had an electric guitar setup on stage which he used only once during the show. He picked up the electric guitar and began creating loud distorted noises that would fall within the genre of experimental art-rock. He did not sing along and it appeared obvious that he was improvising. This was an interesting moment because it closely paralleled a similar moment in history when Bob Dylan, early in his career as a Singer/Songwriter in the 1960's, hauled an electric guitar on stage during an extensive tour and was booed by most of his audiences for "electrifying" his music. The implication was that Dylan had left the purist pursuits of folk music and had entered the realm of rock, signaled by the use of an electric guitar. Dylan had become an "urban folk singer", taking on the perils of the city and its technology and leaving behind the purity of the past tradition. The parallels between these two situations include the genre of the artists, the acoustic nature of their music up to that point, and the relative "new-ness" of their public persona as artists. However, Sexton's crowd at the Meyer Horowitz theatre on September 25, 1999 exploded into affirming applause for his rock-like improvisational efforts.

The difference between Dylan's situation in the 1960's and Sexton's in 1999 seems to imply that purity to a specific genre (particularly folk which is defined by perceived authenticity) is not held in as high a regard now as it was in the 1960's. It appears that genre blending is more acceptable now within the Singer/Songwriter scenes than it was 30 years ago. This is an important fact that contributes to the liminal nature of the present day Singer/Songwriter.

Another angle of liminality displayed by the Singer/Songwriter genre is found in the folk/pop dichotomy. That is, Singer/Songwriter's are often categorized as folk musicians, by their product being placed in "Folk" CD bins, but there are also famous crossover artists such as Sarah McLachlan and Jewel who display the typical elements of Singer/Songwriter-ness but are now being promoted and marketed as "pop" artists. McLachlan, originally from Halifax, is a particularly good example since she has recently crossed over from Singer/Songwriter into the genres of film music and "diva pop" as well as having crossed national boundaries thus finding a relatively large amount of success in the United States (for instance, she performed at the Academy Awards 2000).

Therefore, the Singer/Songwriter finds herself in this ambiguous space between folk on the one hand with its celebration of authenticity through tradition and on the other hand pop with its embracing of commodification and mass production. The independent artist who is basically in charge of their own career can then decide which direction they will go regarding promotion, composition and style. She is not simply "folk", even though she may perform in a "folk" style, because her promotional image also plays a large role in the categorization process. She may *sound* like folk, but *look* like pop. Therefore, her liminal nature continues as she maintains access to both worlds.

Longhurst suggests that the term 'folk culture' "is applied to forms of culture which are tightly linked to particular social groups and which are not subject to mass distribution even if electronically produced (Longhurst 1995). Terminology such as folk culture is often used in relation to discussion about folk music and the equally

broad category of "roots music", which Shuker describes as "based on the notion that the sounds and the style of the music should continue to resemble its original source", whatever that source may be (Shuker 1998: 264).

In a discussion of genre it is important to attempt to define as clearly as possible the differentiating characteristics of various genres in question. This has become an increasingly difficult and complex process due to the vast amount of genre-blending and blurring that has occurred recently. Due to this genre blending and the cross-fertilization that happens between interacting scenes there occurs much trading of musical and aesthetic resources resulting in what Appadurai terms "post-blurred genres" (Appadurai 1996: 51). Appadurai refers to this post-blurring as "a state after which genre categories no longer hold well defined and easily observable boundaries due to there appropriation and double entendre" (Appadurai 1996: 51). In the case of my study the relatively recent proliferation and fracturing of genres into sub-genres has made this process more complex resulting in a "post-blurred" state where many commonly held associations have become ambiguous and are no longer held in common. For example, a Singer/Songwriter, whose music falls well within the aesthetic boundaries of typical folk categorization, might employ non-folk images and visual cues on gig promo, such as highly stylized computer generated graphics and "space-age" animated images. This apparent semiotic conflict between low-tech traditional sounds and high-tech visual cues may have caused great confusion (and low attendance) in the past, but is now accepted and even celebrated as common practice.

This present genre liminality is beneficial to the artist in that it allows him more freedom in terms of performance since he can access a number of different target audiences by simply passing from one genre system to another according to the context. A particularly talented and diverse Singer/Songwriter can write music that can quite simply be transformed from "folk" to "pop" to "rock" with a few minor adjustments, thus giving him access to three separate systems within his music scene including different target audiences, venues and promotional mechanisms such as radio and print media. For example, a Singer/Songwriter could write two 45 minute sets of traditionally folk material which is intended to be performed solo at folk clubs and cafes around Alberta. This material will then be promoted to folk venues such as the City Media Club or the Full Moon Folk Club with a certain style of promotion that is intended to appeal to folk preferences. As an example of this sort of promotion, one might employ grass-roots/natural looking promo shots, straight-to-the-point biographical material, minimal "hype," and recent press from folk/roots writers such as Peter North and Roger Levesque (Edmonton Journal). However, that same artist can take the same music, add an electric guitar, a percussion player and a bass player and promote it to pop/rock clubs like The Rev or The New City Likwid Lounge. In the latter case, the artist will employ promotional tools that are meant to appeal to a pop/rock aesthetic such as quotes from pop magazines (such as *Billboard*), highly stylized promotional pictures, and heavily "hyped" and "hip" biographical prose.

For example, the "bio" for an artist's traditional folk performance might read, "John Smith is a veteran of the Western Canadian prairie music scene. Although he is

comfortable in a variety of folk settings, he is a versatile and gifted instrumentalist, songwriter and lyricist. His original music ranges from the socially-conscious to the deeply personal with songs that are lyrically rich, penetrating and perceptive" (http://www3.mb.sympatico.ca/~baardman/bio.html). The "bio" for the same artist's pop performance might state, "Johnny Two-Tone Smith has been laying down virtuosic grooves virtually since the beginning of time. Johnny T is at home in many styles and leaps genre barriers with a single phrase whether he is writing, playing or singing. His vocal fireworks and slashing guitar licks cut right to the heart. Johnny T simply must be heard!"

This ability for an artist to pass from one venue genre to the next on a regular basis displays the context-relatedness of musical genre. That is, when folk music is performed in a "folk" venue it is called "folk, but when the same music is performed, with a few minor adjustments, in a non-folk venue it may be called something else that is more suited to fit that venue's history and marketing. A particularly relevant example is the case of the Canadian "Folk Festival".

GENRE AND THE FOLK FESTIVAL

Canada has many folk festivals that take place all across the country and throughout the year. Two of the largest and longest running in Canada are the Edmonton Folk Festival and the Winnipeg Folk Festival. The latter festival has been running for over 25 years and takes place annually in July just outside Winnipeg in

Birds Hill Park. In its promotional literature this festival is marketed as an eclectic music event with diverse music ranging from many different strains of "folk".

The folk festival is an important venue for Singer/Songwriters as it provides them with a unique opportunity to perform for very large audiences (sometimes as many as 80,000). Many of the folk festival attendees are intensely interested in and knowledgeable about folk music and are regular consumers of Singer/Songwriters' music. This often leads to a satisfying performance experience for the Singer/Songwriter since these audiences tend to be very attentive and responsive to the performer's efforts and expressions. The folk festival is also helpful for the Singer/Songwriter as it provides one of the few high-profile venues where an artist can perform alone. There are folk clubs and various venues that allow solo performance in Canada but the vast majority of popular music performing venues prefer bands or groups as opposed to solo acts. Being able to perform solo is beneficial to the Singer/Songwriter financially and logistically since playing a number of festivals in a summer requires a great deal of travelling.

Folk festivals are split (regarding physical space) into two main areas. The larger area is where the stages and concessions are set up and the audiences have freedom to roam virtually wherever they like. The second section is called the "performers area" or "backstage area". This latter area is off limits to anyone without a performer's pass (i.e. – someone hired as a performer at this festival) or a volunteers pass (i.e. – someone registered as a volunteer at this festival). The backstage area usually consists of a "green room" where there is free food and drinks for performers. In my experience, this area is also where much of the informal networking between

musicians and media personnel occurs. Performers and industry participants (who managed to obtain a backstage pass) mingle in this backstage area, which sometimes leads to future alliances and projects. For example, a Singer/Songwriter might find future band mates or touring alliances amongst the plethora of talented and like-minded artists that she meets backstage at the folk festival. Or she might be interviewed backstage by radio or print media personnel. For the Singer/Songwriter, this backstage area is an important and sometimes profitable component of the folk festival.

Folk festivals have a hierarchy of staging areas including small "open stages" where virtually anyone can sign up to perform, workshop stages, side stages, and the main stage. The most prestigious stage is the main stage, which also draws the largest crowd. A common folk festival format includes workshops and small stage concerts during the day and then main stage performances at night from about 7PM to midnight. Few Singer/Songwriters perform on the main stage as solo artists, although there are exceptions including Martin Sexton, Vance Gilbert and others who have climbed through the ranks playing smaller stages and gaining a large following amongst the folk festival crowds. Another performance slot at the folk festival that is particularly well suited for the Singer/Songwriter is called the "tweener" or "fill spot." These are 5-10 minute spots between main stage acts where the Singer/Songwriter or solo act will perform one or two songs for the main stage crowd while the stage hands set up the stage for the next act. These "tweener" spots provide an opportunity for the up and coming solo Singer/Songwriter to perform in front of a much larger audience than they usually have.

A wide range of acts appear at folk festivals, some of which have almost no observable connection to the genre "folk." For example, at the 1999 Winnipeg folk festival an artist named Veda Hille appeared with her four piece rock band. They performed a stylistically varied set of original rock music with avante garde inflections. The band was comprised of Veda on four-string guitar, electric guitar, vocals and keyboard, and a band including bass, heavily distorted electric guitar, and drums. It appeared that this band was not chosen for its rooted ness in any particular folk tradition. Veda Hille is not marketed as a folk musician. She is marketed as a "stylistic innovator" and her music is often considered a fusion of **avante-garde** composition with rock. Her hair was dyed a bright red but was covered most of the set with a ten gallon cowboy hat, presenting a convenient semiotic metaphorical opposition representing a hip, young, vibrant flashiness on one hand being "covered up" for the moment by a visual cue for tradition and "down-home-ness".

An even more striking example of genre-blending and the context-dependence of venue occurred at the North Country Fair 1999 in Joussard, Alberta where a Canadian hip-hop artist from British Columbia, named Kinnie Starr, performed. The North Country Fair is a music festival consisting almost entirely of musicians who fall within the "folk" category. It is considered to be a stop on the Canadian folk festival circuit and draws much the same target audience as other folk events in Alberta including the Edmonton Folk Fest and South Country Fair. It can be considered part of the Edmonton scene since a large majority of the attendees reside in the Edmonton area. In the North Country Fair program Kinnie Starr's bio read:

> Hip-hop beats, choppy rhythm guitar and provocative rap with attitude to spare, she sounds like she's digested every subculture from the 50s on, hailed

> as a new Canadian talent from Vancouver, she's an original with the conviction to stir up people's minds by voicing opinion.

She performed vocally, speaking and singing along with pre-recorded backbeats and briefly with a bass player and another vocalist. The only observable "folk" element to her performance was her politically charged lyrics touching on topics including homosexuality, female empowerment and descriptions of the experience of being Metis (which she referred to as "half-breed"). During her mainstage performance she introduced a portion of the show which she called "free styling" which comprised of audience members getting on stage and making up "rhymes" to the beats that were being played over the sound system. This portion of the show eventually resulted in mayhem where many fans were jumping up on the stage uninvited, some of which were then aggressively thrown off of the six foot stage by stage hands acting as stage security.

It was interesting to note that the one act that fell the farthest outside of the genre of "folk" created the only potentially dangerous situation throughout the three day event. In retrospect, it seems as if the stage hands, many of which were folk performers in their own right, were acting from a "folk festival" frame of mind which did not necessarily suit the act in question. At a folk festival the audience is never allowed to jump on stage and interact physically with the artists, while in the hip-hop world this can be a perfectly reasonable way for the audience to behave, especially during the portion of the show called "free styling". Therefore, this situation presents an example of a cross-genre or a cross-cultural experience where the logic of one genre does not suit the logic of another genre but is connected only by the framing device of "the folk festival" venue.

The Winnipeg folk festival and to a lesser extent The North Country Fair are part of a circuit of similar festivals and venues across Canada (and the United States) which are commonly referred to as the "folk circuit". Some performers make most of their living throughout their careers touring from one venue to the next within this circuit and rely on this market for their target audience and their subsequent CD sales. While an artist (such as Veda Hille) is touring this circuit they are commonly considered a "folk artist", regardless of their prior affiliation with other genres. Veda Hille is a particularly good example since she performed the same music one day after her North Country Fair performance at Jazz City in Edmonton under the guise of a "jazz" genre affiliation. This fact seems to reinforce the notion that genre is context dependent.

AT THE HOUSE CONCERT

Another unique example of context playing a significant role in defining genre is the "House Concert", as it displays many of the salient features that are celebrated by folk consumers. These venues exemplify intimacy, the perception of "authenticity" and a sense of formality in the midst of informality. A house concert is an informal performance put on by a local resident with access to a large basement or residence. Tickets usually cost between $10-$20 each, and sales go solely to pay the performer who often performs solo with little or no amplification. The audience usually ranges from 20 - 50 people, who have likely been invited personally by the "promoter" and are regular attenders of these events.

The house concert is a unique situation in that it displays many of the formal elements of a large public concert but takes place in the midst of informality and is attended mainly through word of mouth by friends and family of the promoter. As an example I will list some of the salient features of the latest house concert I attended on April 22, 2000 featuring Singer/Songwriter Annie Gallup.

The show was scheduled to start at 8pm. I was told by the promoter to show up "early" so we could start right on time. I arrived at 7:45pm and was the third person there (not including the owners of the house). The concert began at 8:20. By 8:19 Annie Gallup had still not appeared in the house (yet I had seen her arrive in her car outside at 7:45). The promoter of the show addressed the crowd of about 40 people in order to introduce Annie. He told a story about how he had heard of her originally, how talented he thought she was, and the basic details of her history including where she was from. Annie entered the room by walking precariously through the closely bunched crowd of people toward the "stage"while holding her guitar. The stage area was five square feet of hardwood beside the bar in the host's basement. She played a 45 minute set, took a 30 minute break and played another 45 minute set. The bedroom of the host's son was used as Annie's "green room".

In talking to some audience members about why they come to house concerts, the concept of "intimacy" arose frequently. It was stated that house concerts are the most intimate setting in which to see a Singer/Songwriter perform and that this was the attractive element that drew them to attend. This intimate context presents interesting challenges and opportunities for the performer. First of all, there is very little separation between the performer and the audience and no amplification to "hide

behind". Therefore, the performer must create a performance space within the room in order to project an aura of "performance". Annie did this in a number of ways throughout the evening thus signalling her experience as a performer of house concerts. She "embodied the song" through visual cues such as closing her eyes, swaying to the music, staring blankly into space, and slipping in and out of a pseudo trance-like state during appropriately soothing moments in a song.

The "stage" was also defined by the introduction/entrance and the "last song/exit" that occurred. Annie said, "I'll play one more for you" which served to prime the audience for the end of the show and the subsequent "encore". After her last chord died away, she awkwardly stepped through the applauding crowd toward the bedroom/green room and then waited at the back of the darkened room as Rod Campbell (the promoter) made his way to the stage. When Rod reached the "stage" area he clapped voraciously and yelled "more!". Others in the crowd followed his lead and "mooed" for an encore. Annie then approached the stage area again, waited for the applause to die down, thanked the crowd and played one more song.

The intimacy of the situation was particularly significant in relation to the "encore" since the fact that Annie had nowhere to hide tended to undermine the assumed improvisatory nature of this tradition. It became obvious that this encore was planned to some degree and was in fact expected by promoter and performer. The actions that combine to create this virtual "staging area", which the performer steps "in to" and "out of", can be seen as "framing devices". That is, they frame the seemingly discontinuous and insignificant actions that the performer displays thus creating an experience that can be received as a coherent whole. Elements such as

posture and "stage talk" become part of this unified and continuous whole through their existence within what Silverstein has termed "meta-pragmatic framing devices" (as described by Monson 1996).

Individual interactive instances, or "indexical moments", are aligned by and reveal a larger context, the "meta-pragmatic frame", which shapes the continuity and nature of the instances through social and cultural contextualization (Monson 1996). For example, Gallup's posture and emotive gestures can imply how an audience member "should feel" at a certain musical moment, or her "stage talk" (i.e. verbal banter between songs) can prescribe a specific reading of a song before she begins to play it. Often she would precede a song with a story that led to the writing of that song, thus framing the song with a specific context. For experienced house concert attendees, these framing cues can create a communal sense of insider-ness. An artist is considered especially brilliant if she can cultivate this communal sense even for those who are not regular concert attendees. This ability to create a sense of community within a room full of strangers is highly prized in the folk music world, as was displayed through various comments after the show celebrating intimacy and communality. The House Concert venue often provides a staging ground for the development of this ability in its rawest and most grass-roots form.

Pre-concert behaviour also relates in an interesting way to the issue of separation between audience and performer. Annie had shown up at the house by 7:45pm but did not reveal herself in the house until she was introduced from the "stage". In a "regular" concert setting, that is, at a "soft-seat" venue, the artist would have a plush "green room" in which to wait back stage before the concert. He or she

would then appear to the audience only while performing on stage. This latter situation can tend to contribute to a sense of separation between audience and performer and subsequently heighten elements of "projecting fame" on the artist. That is, the average "every day-ness" of the artist is hidden from the audiences view and therefore elements of stardom and fame can more easily be projected upon the artist without the cognitive dissonance of seeing the artist going about regular human behaviour, such as awkwardly tripping through a house concert crowd on the way to the bedroom/"green room".

This element of intimacy, which is often fetishized within the folk genre, plays a significant role in the success and maintenance of the house concert as a Singer/Songwriter venue. Other genres such as Rock and Hip-Hop do not fit well with this genre of venue, although they do have their own forms of house concerts such as house parties.

MARKETABLE VS. "NON-MARKETABLE" GENRES

An interesting and crucial site for defining and separating genres exists in regard to funding and granting agencies that exist within Canada. Two of the most prominent are FACTOR and The Canada Council for the Arts. FACTOR (Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent on Record) is a federal agency which handles the funding of "marketable" genres within the Canadian music industry while The Canada Council is stated as providing funding for music which is not supported by the Canadian market. This differentiation can cause confusion since the categories

are only vaguely defined and it is difficult to discern the appropriate category for much of the artistic expression within Canada. For example, the Canada Council document entitled "Grants available for musicians and music organizations" has a "grant to professional musicians (individuals)" which offers "emerging, mid-career and established professional musicians and composers of all world cultures an opportunity to pursue their individual artistic development". Under this explanation two choices are given: Classical Music and Non-Classical Music. These broad categories are not specific enough to assist artists who fuse elements such as the avante-garde with folk, **worldbeat**, or **electroacoustic** resources. This issue becomes more complex later in the document when under the heading "Career Development Program (grants)" the options become: Classical Music and Popular Traditions (non-classical). This latter category is so broad that it would seem that almost any music that does not immediately fall under the rubric of "Classical Art Music" would fit. However, when I called the Canada Council to enquire about this grant I was warned that, although my music could be considered "folk" (which would seem to fall under the heading "Popular traditions...non-classical") it must be non-mainstream and outside of the regular popular music market in order to qualify for funding from the Canada Council. The written statement outlining these qualifications read as follows:

> Eligible forms of music include Aboriginal, classical music of all world cultures, contemporary/new, jazz, folk, world music, fusion of music and spoken word, electroacoustic and 'musique actuelle'. Forms of music for which an established industrial infrastructure exists (such as pop, rock, country, new age, urban and commercial forms of contemporary folk, jazz and world music) may receive support from programs administered by SOCAN and FACTOR, or through provincial music industry associations or provincial arts councils, but are not eligible for support from the Canada Council for the Arts. ("Commercial" is defined by the music's intent and present market-driven potential.)

The Canada Council was first conceived only for "Classical music" but then began to also accept non-classical music according to its non-commercial potential. This differentiation between "commercial" and "non-commercial" based on the "intent and ...market-driven potential" is significant since the music that is deemed too "commercial" for the Canada Council then goes to FACTOR and is largely judged according to its "commercial potential". That is, if it is deemed "not commercially viable" by FACTOR it is rejected from receiving grant money, while it may have been rejected for the opposite reason (i.e. it was too "commercial") by the Canada Council. Therefore, the Singer/Songwriter who is not gaining commercial success has an avenue (The Canada Council) from which to receive funding for future projects assuming that they are deemed non-commercial in artistic intent. The fact that the Canada Council provides funds for non-commercial music projects allows the Singer/Songwriter (who has received Canada Council funding) more artistic freedom as he is able to develop in unique ways artistically without having to cater to mainstream modes of composition.

Chapter 3
THE CANADIAN MILIEU

Three major forces affect the life of the Canadian Singer/Songwriter. These forces are Media (including radio and television broadcasting, music critics, and journalists), Government (who appear most prominently by way of cultural initiatives whose stated intention is to aid artist development in Canada), and The Industry (including Canadian and non-Canadian record labels, retailers, publishers, and distributors).

In order to set the scene within which Canadian Singer/Songwriters act this chapter gives some background regarding the broadcasting industry in Canada focussing mainly on the **CRTC** (Canadian Radio and Television Telecommunications Commission), the development of **CanCon** (Canadian Content Regulations) and some Singer/Songwriters' perceptions of these regulations. As well as setting the stage for Singer/Songwriter activity, this chapter includes Singer/Songwriter's perceptions about the benefits and lack of benefits of certain cultural initiatives that exist within the Canadian music industry. Their comments display a gap of understanding between the views held by creators of these cultural initiatives and the actual reality of the Singer/Songwriter's situation. In spite of the vast amount of lobbying and effort that has gone into the creation of Canadian Content regulations, the Singer/Songwriters' comments below suggest that government decision-makers do not fully understand the present realities of being an aspiring Singer/Songwriter in Canada and thus the initiatives that exist to help them and other Canadian musicians are outdated and ineffective.

AN ACCOUNT OF BROADCASTING AND MEDIA IN THE CANADIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CANADIAN CONTENT REGULATIONS

Initially, the Canadian Content Regulations (CanCon), instituted by the **CRTC** (Canadian Radio and Television Telecommunications Commission) in 1970, stated that a minimum of 30% of all musical compositions broadcast by radio stations during certain specified periods would have to meet at least <u>one</u> of the following four conditions:

a) the playing or singing (or both) of the composition must be principally by a Canadian
b) the music was written by a Canadian
c) the lyrics were written by a Canadian
d) the performance was produced in Canada.
(Press Release: Television Programs, 1970)

After one year, the regulation changed, stating that <u>two</u> of these criteria would have to be met for the music to qualify as Canadian content, and the percentage of Canadian content required on radio broadcasts has since been raised to 35% (Romanow 1974: 76; for more info on CanCon and Broadcasting in Canada see Appendix 1).

Radio stations are held directly accountable, for the Canadian Content balance in programming, by the CRTC's Radio Branch. This branch analyzes the programming aspects of all applications for new AM and FM services and monitors all licensees to ensure compliance with Commission regulations and policies (*Guide to the CRTC* 1992:16). Commercial stations such as EZRock (Edmonton) and college stations such as CJSR (Edmonton) keep detailed logs of everything played on their station. This logging process becomes especially important to

Singer/Songwriters during the few weeks per year that performing rights organizations such as SOCAN (Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada) administer "sampling" procedures for royalties purposes. A major difference between the way these two stations carry out these procedures is that EZRock has a computerized music scheduling system called "Selector" that logs everything, including commercials, whereas CJSR is all logged manually by the host of each show. Due to the perceived impossibility of regulating radio broadcasting in Canada twenty-four hours a day, these logging and sampling procedures are thought to provide a reasonably accurate reflection of the percentage of Canadian content broadcast.

A motivating factor for broadcasters to comply with these regulations is that the CRTC has the legal authority to revoke broadcasting licenses. Consequently, program directors are strongly urged to adhere to content regulations by their station managers. This issue became apparent recently at EZRock, when a program director was fired for programming an improper balance of music.

The rationale behind the Canadian Content regulations is that public broadcasting, as an instrument of national culture, should reflect the culture of Canada in its programming (*Back to the Future* 1995:3). These regulations have always been attached to fears of American competition, and particularly competition with huge American communications companies, which are attempting to seek a foothold in Canada "through strategic partnerships with private sector film, TV, telecommunications and new media companies" (*Back to the Future* 1995:3). It is hoped that the establishment of these regulations will allow for the full range of

Canada's culturally diverse creative talent to have access to airtime, in spite of American competition.

Victor Rabinovitch has suggested that the "results of the Canadian cultural model is very positive by any standard". As proof for this suggestion, in regard to the independent musician, he states:

> In recorded music, despite the major presence of the six multinational companies that dominate worldwide sales, Canadian 'independents' continue to play an important role and release about 80 per cent of Canadian-content recordings. (Rabinovitch 1999: 227)

Will Straw contributes to this evidence regarding the benefits of the Canadian content regulations stating that in 1995, Statistics Canada reported that the market share held by recordings with Canadian content (as defined by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) had risen from 8 per cent to 13 per cent of total industry sales over the previous five years (Straw 1996: 95). Straw goes on to suggest that although these content regulations may be "emblematic of the unequal relationship of different industries operating within Canada to public control and influence, it is important to acknowledge the widespread perception that they have been perhaps one of the most genuinely effective instances of activist cultural policy in Canadian history" (Straw 1996: 105).

Julian Reed addressed the issue of competition with the United States in the House of Commons when he referred to the "difficulty Canadian musicians had in being heard and the almost impossibility of getting Canadian productions over radio until the CRTC came into the picture". His statement seems to imply that things have changed in a positive way since the establishment of the CRTC and its regulations (Hansard, 1994:4600). Sheila Copps also reflected this attitude as she celebrated the

CanCon regulations for their "guarantee that Canadians can now listen to their own songs, not just to what comes from the United States" (Hansard 1996:100). It is also assumed that these regulations will contribute in a helpful way to the growth and development of the Canadian music industry infrastructure, which will provide incentives for Canadian Singer/Songwriters to stay in Canada.

CANCON: RESPONSE (From Industry and the Singer/Songwriter)

There has been some positive response to the CanCon regulations, among industry professionals. For example, Brad Phillips, program director at the Vancouver station Z95, says,"CanCon's had a huge effect...there's a ton of great Canadian music around now--and it's obviously selling" (Jennings 1995:40-2).

In a recent interview I did with Holger Peterson, founder of Stony Plain Records, he responded to the question of CanCon's affect on the Canadian music industry by saying:

> (the) CRTC regulations (CanCon) have really helped us in that they have provided an open door for independent country...we're a roots music label, so we have an opportunity to get more of our music on commercial radio...I think it (CanCon) is extremely helpful to every part of the Canadian (music) industry and its infrastructure. First of all, it means that the songwriters and publishers are paid their share because its broadcast on the radio, and SOCAN, being a performing rights organization, collects money from those radio stations and distributes it to the Canadian writers and publishers...it's a safeguard, because I think that most commercial broadcasters, given the choice, wouldn't play 35% Canadian content. They'd much rather not have any regulations and let the market dictate...but at the same time its much easier for them to hire US consultants, which they do, using US tip sheets...and they'd probably have alot more satellite programming which wouldn't have Canadian content...if given the option. "Interview, May 1999"

A high profile, long-time professional Canadian musician who is not a

Singer/Songwriter (pseudonym "Bob"), responded to the same question by saying:

> the Canadian content regulations of the CRTC...are good for the business. The Canadian recording industry, and by that I mean the whole vertically integrated structure that makes music available to people on records of one kind or another, has no relation now, (regarding) its size, its health, and its capacities, to what it was before the introduction of the CRTC's Canadian content regulations...the level of that activity, the quality of it, and the health of it--the health of the whole integrated structure--would not be what it is now were it not for the CRTC's Cancon regulations. The introduction of those regulations didn't *create* an industry because one already existed. But it was tiny, almost helpless. And the introduction of those regulations...*permitted* the creation of a healthy infrastructure. "Interview, September 1999"

Singer/Songwriters, however, gave mainly negative reactions and responses to the effect, or lack of effect, of the CRTC's Canadian content regulations. Paul Bellous, a local Edmonton Singer/Songwriter, states:

> (CanCon) has *no* effect on me or anyone in my peer group...it just means that Bryan Adams will be played twice as much...maybe (it will effect) Moe Berg of Pursuit of Happiness, (or) bands in the mid range, but for people below radio play it will make no difference...a few people get lucky, but in essence it will make the rich richer and have no effect on the rest of us here "Interview, February 1999"

The irony is that Bryan Adams does not actually qualify as Canadian content due to the MAPL classification system whereby two of the following criteria, including the musicians being Canadian, the author being Canadian, the performance/production recorded by a Canadian, or the lyrics being written by a Canadian, must be met in order for the recording to be deemed "Canadian Content". However, Bellous' comment is representative of the sentiments expressed by many other Singer/Songwriters, who, like him, are not making their main source of income from music.

CANCON: "CULTURAL PROTECTIONISM"

Some have suggested that the CanCon regulations are a negative form of "cultural protectionism" and "cultural exploitation", and that they act as a roadblock for the growth of individual Canadian Singer/Songwriters' careers and a "quality" Canadian recording industry. For example, in the House of Commons on May 30, 1994, Mr. Hermanson stated:

> We do not consider someone to be of any value because government dollars go to support them...(rather)...we expect and measure value based on the saleability of what is being produced for us...that is the true measure of quality and the true measure of culture in Canada (Hansard, 1994: 4601).

Hermanson's comments imply that if a product is not commercially successful without content regulations (i.e. in a "free" market) it should be deemed inherently "unworthy" of success and should not be aided by regulations. Chuck Strahl continued this line of reasoning in the House of Commons referring to the role these content regulations play in the development of Canadian "superstars". He states:

> when the minister went so far as to say that if it was not for the kinds of rules we are debating today [ie. CanCon], "Celine Dion would be picking berries in some backwoods somewhere, never having achieved stardom", well, I do not know. Every time I see Celine Dion or listen to her music, I think this superstar blows the socks off most of the world with some of the best selling CDs, records and tapes of all time. To think that the minister said there was no way she could have made it if we had not had these content rules or this kind of regulation is farcical. It is just not true. No one can possibly believe that Celine Dion would be anything but a superstar regardless (Hansard 1997: 9003).

Celine Dion is an interesting example in this case as she was chosen early in her career to be the recipient of a large amount of Federal Canadian money in order to record a "high quality" product which would then be marketed on an international

scale. This allotment of money that she received was from a Canadian "radio stars/ talent development" program that was meant to raise the profile of emerging Canadian artists. Celine was, at that time, selling hundreds of thousands of albums in her native province of Quebec and was thus chosen to receive all of the money in this program, as opposed to the original plan which was to split this money amongst many emerging independent Canadian artists. Dion has since become a pop diva with international acclaim.

Another cultural initiative that exists in Canada and is instituted by the CRTC is a program that requires commercial radio stations to allot a certain amount of money to "developing their musical community in Canada". Brian Tamke, owner of a digital radio station called DMX digital music express in Calgary, tells this story:

> When I used to work for commercial radio, we took that community development money and spent it on billboards for major label Canadian artists such as Bryan Adams and Triumph. So, you'd be driving down the street and you'd see a huge billboard of Bryan Adams and beside him would be our radio station logo. This was said to benefit the Canadian artist and the Canadian musical community as well as being a commercial for the radio station. But we never spent any of that money on emerging independent artists...nobody does! "Interview, May 1999"

It seems, from this account, that this community development money does not provide the benefit to less known independent artists that it promises.

BIG BUSINESS AND CULTURAL RETALIATION

Large Canadian companies such as Telus, parent company of AGT and EdTel, agree with demands for a more "open, competitive market", as opposed to what they have termed a "closed broadcast system that will become increasingly irrelevant to the needs and interests of Canadians". Telus suggests that "the Canadian customer

demand should be the primary determinant of what is Canadian culture" (Jenkinson 1995:43).

Another major concern for proponents of Canadian content regulations is the threat of U.S. retaliation via Canada-U.S. trading relationships. A poignant example of these retaliatory measures occurred in January of 1995, when the CRTC forced the Country Music Television (CMT) Network (based in Nashville) off Canadian cable systems in favour of the Canadian-run New Country Network. The U.S. responded by shutting out Canadian country artists from CMT broadcasts, with its estimated audience of 32 million viewers world-wide (Hansard 1995:9280). CMT, along with the Travel Channel, the Nashville Network, EMI, Court TV, the Weather Channel and United Video, filed a complaint alleging that Canadian broadcast policy, which it called "misguided" and "ultimately hopeless", discriminates against the American entertainment industry costing it an estimated $787 million annually in lost revenue opportunities (Jenkinson 1995: 43).

This complaint implies that there is a double standard at work since Canadian cable services are widely distributed in the U.S. while foreign services are arbitrarily restricted on Canadian cable systems. For example, MuchMusic, the Canadian music video channel, is widely available south of the border while its American counterpart, MTV, is barred from Canada (Jenkinson 1995: 43).

Dale Ladouceur, a local Edmonton Singer/Songwriter, is less optimistic about the benefits of a "free" market. She suggests that powerful forces, such as large American companies, still maintain the upper hand resulting in the "Americanization of Canada and the globe". This concern, regarding the danger of large,

"monopolistic" corporations, appears to be especially prevalent among musicians whose primary income is not directly music related, and is less prominent among high-profile, professional musicians who are largely "successful" in the music industry. This difference in perception seems to reflect a larger issue regarding the vastly opposing viewpoints and styles of articulation between, what I will term, "professional" musicians and "amateur" musicians in the Canadian music industry. In this case the term "professional" refers to those who are relatively high-profile and are able to make a living from their chosen musical field, while the term "amateur" refers to those who are relatively unknown from a public perspective and must support their musical practices with other employment.

DISTRIBUTION AND MARKETING

In order to view more fully the effects that the Canadian content regulations have on Singer/Songwriters at different levels in the Canadian music industry, one must become aware of the day-to-day realities, desires and struggles of professional and amateur Singer/Songwriters in Canada.

Two of the main elements that stand between a Singer/Songwriter (who has produced a CD) and economic success are distribution and marketing. Distribution can occur through a number of different avenues including local and small scale distribution through an "indie" label, larger scale national distribution through a bigger independent label like Sonic Unyon in Ontario, or wide scale international distribution through a major label such as Sony or Warner. "Bob" (a high profile

instrumentalist) suggested that the CanCon regulations directly affect Canadian Singer/Songwriters' access to distribution by nurturing a "technological infrastructure", by which all musicians in Canada benefit. "Bob" states:

> there has to be some sort of distribution or infrastructure...and the CanCon regulations are meant to assist in the establishment, and maintain the existence of, those infrastructures. As the people who devised them know...if people hear Canadian records on the radio, they will go and *buy* them, and if they go and buy them, then the artist will be able to afford to do another one, and the recording studio in which he has been doing this, which has been held together by bailing wire and chewing gum, will be able, because of this increased business, to buy better equipment, and then he will have some competition, because there will be another studio, and then this guy who used to only distribute Capitol records, will say 'hey I can distribute these Canadian records too', and they will also sell. "Interview, September 1999"

So, in this context, *access* becomes an important element to consider. That is, do amateurs and professionals have equal access to these means of distribution, and are the CanCon regulations equally beneficial to all levels in the industry? "Bob" suggests:

> There's no distinction between the way (CanCon) helps amateurs and the way it helps professionals. Virtually all amateurs are aspiring professionals. There are very few exceptions to that. They are part of the whole infrastructure...every actor who doesn't have a play at the moment and is a waiter or a cab driver is therefore at that moment an amateur whatever-he-is. But he keeps trying, and if there is no infrastructure in which he can work, (and) no recording studio in which he can record, (or) no band to accompany the singer, (or) no distribution for the record...then everybody will always be amateurs. "Interview, September 1999"

Regarding marketing and the dissemination of an artist's public image, however, some Singer/Songwriters suggest that there is a rift between different levels within the industry. For example, Rick Unruh, a local Winnipeg Singer/Songwriter, states:

> Regarding marketing, how can an indie [i.e. independent musician] compete with Sony, when Sony can drop $4 million to make people think they like this artist. "Interview, May 1999"

"Bob" affirmed this notion, suggesting that large entertainment companies can even sell "bad" stuff in large quantities since they have the resources to market them heavily. He states:

> Many bad movies take in millions because the promotion is good. If they've got a turkey, (they just say),'oops we've got to put $10 million into that one', and then they get their money back. "Interview, September 1999"

THE INTERNET

In spite of this apparent divide between amateur and professional access to "mainstream" channels of distribution and marketing, there are new methods of marketing and distributing one's product that appear to be particularly well suited for "grassroots" level musicians. For example, the Internet, and more particularly, the **"MP3"** can serve in this regard.

MP3s allow artists to upload their music, or someone else's music, onto a file that is then downloaded via the Internet by people who are equipped with a modem, network access, a sound card and decompression software, resulting in a relatively high quality reproduction. The advantage of the MP3 as a compression standard is its compressed size, which makes it cheap and quick to download. Usually, for marketing purposes, MP3 files do not contain whole songs, rather, fragments of songs can be downloaded in order to entice the potential consumer into buying the album through mail order, e-mail order, or at a music store.

Singer/Songwriters such as Bill Mallonee of the Vigilantes of Love and Dale Ladouceur of the (Edmontonian) Mavens rely heavily on the Internet for CD sales and marketing. After being signed with a series of different record labels, Mallonee states that his move to marketing himself independently via the Internet, has given him "more creative freedom" and connected him "more deeply with the people who appreciate the Vigilantes' music...(which is)", he suggests,"much better than recording an album and then giving it up for adoption and never seeing it again" (Ashmun 1999:32).

However, not all industry participants consider MP3 files beneficial for their personal needs. This is where the divide between amateurs' and professionals' specific desires and contexts becomes apparent. Record label executive Holger Peterson articulates this problematic when he states:

> I saw an article the other day that referred to downloading music as "artists love it and record companies hate it"...well, I think that that is a really bad generalization. The artists that love it are the ones that are unsigned and trying to do demos and get someone's attention by putting it on the internet or wherever...there's also a lot of artists who make a living from doing music, who deserve to be paid for it. Certainly those people will not be putting their music on the Internet. The people who do this professionally won't want to give their music away for free. "Interview, May 1999"

The issue of MP3 trading on the Internet becomes particularly complicated when copying is unauthorized by the owner of the copyright. In this case it becomes an issue not only of personal marketing strategies but of intellectual property. On this issue, Peterson suggests:

> There is nothing wrong with making your music available for people to download...that is their option...but if Bryan Adams doesn't want their music to be on the Internet, than that is their option...they want to be paid for their music, they don't want to give it away...you have to respect that...whether it's BB King or Celine Dion or Frank Zappa's catalogue or Robert Johnson's

> catalogue...or the Spice Girls...they all can make that choice and people who get paid for their music are going to choose to get paid for their music. "Interview, May 1999"

"Bob" considers home copying a very significant problem that affects him personally. He suggests that something must be done to regulate MP3 files and illegal copying, "otherwise, how can you afford to invest $250,000 or $100,000 or $5000 in a record if someone is going to buy one copy of it, put it on the Internet, and everyone just downloads it...the industry will stop".

The Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Music Industry has suggested that, although downloading music from the internet is "currently not widely done", this sort of delivering of music from a "remote file server, being similar to off-the-shelf transactions, could be exempt from licensing subject to the imposition of certain exemption criteria". On a broader level, the Task Force suggests that "Canada should become a leader in the adoption of technical encryption standards to prevent home copying" (*Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Music Industry: "Executive Summary"* 1996).

One response to home copying in Canada that has been put in place by performing rights organizations is the establishment of a tariff on recording media. The intended effect is to strengthen the Canadian music industry by deterring home copying and distributing tariff funds to recording artists (mainly songwriters) through SOCAN. Singer/Songwriters such as Paul Bellous suggest that this tariff will only benefit people who are already collecting relatively large royalties for radioplay and will have the opposite effect on musicians like him, who are still struggling to get on the playlists. He states:

> For those of us with a really tight budget, production of CDs will be doubled...(once they've added) the (proposed) 25 cents/15 minutes of recording media as a tariff to the purchase, off the shelf or from wholesale. So if you are working on your CD...pressing a 74 minute CD, suddenly it's $1.25 more per disc. So your bill to press 1000 CDs just went up a significant amount. "Interview, February 1999"

One might hypothesize that the CanCon regulations would be beneficial in this case as they enforce a mandate to play more Canadian artists, thus providing more **royalty payouts** (and tariff distributions) for them, and potentially assuring that Singer/Songwriters like Paul Bellous get royalties. However, the present system does not always work out that way. The royalty system in Canada, administered by SOCAN, is such that not everything played, or logged, by radio stations gets royalty points. As mentioned earlier, SOCAN uses a station "sampling" system to identify works broadcast, resulting in a "representative cross-section of Canadian stations based on music format, geographic region and language" (SOCAN Facts 1996). Due to this sampling system, it is likely that artists who are not getting regular airplay will not show up on the playlist during the sampling times, and thus will not receive royalties. For example, Bellous related this personal story:

> CJSR did their polling week for SOCAN which they do once every 3 months...poll a small percentage of play at the end of each week, then compile results and extrapolate...but my CD got "taken home" [stolen by a volunteer DJ] so I didn't get any play that week, which means I don't show up on the charts, which means I don't get any royalties this time even though I was on their top 10 for a couple of weeks. "Interview, February 1999"

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Another major challenge that stands between Singer/Songwriters and success within the industry is the vast amount of economic resources needed to record a high

quality product and to promote it through touring and showcasing on a national level. Canada is unusual in that not only does it have content regulations, but it has government funding available to musicians for sound recording grants, showcase grants, and touring grants. On a federal level, this is done through FACTOR/MUSICACTION CANADA (FMC) and the Canada Council, and on a provincial level through organizations such as Manitoba Film and Sound. However, many people working within the Canadian music industry feel as if there is not enough funding made available for the music industry in Canada relative to its potential as a money-making industry. For example, the Task Force for the Development of the Canadian Music Industry has a document on the Internet that states:

> The (Canadian music) industry receives much less government support, relative to its size, than other cultural industries. In 1993, federal support was some $7 million and provincial support around $2 million. In the same year, the industry generated an estimated $200 million in taxes. The size and potential benefits of the industry justifies a higher level of support. (*Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Music Industry: "Introduction"* 1996)

Holger Peterson related a similar sentiment, suggesting:

> There is just not enough money available for granting systems (and) industry support systems. It would be a great investment, apart from a cultural initiative...a much greater investment than the book publishing industry, which gets far in excess of what the music industry gets...or even the film industry. You can go anywhere in the world and find Canadian music on the shelf of a record store. You'd have a harder time finding a Canadian film to go see. And bookstores, well, there may be some Canadian books there but I think that Canadian musicians and songwriters have made a far greater national impact. "Interview, May 1999"

In light of this apparent lack of satisfactory governmental support for music in Canada, one might suggest that musicians could lobby for more funding. When presented with this option, Peterson stated:

> The music industry does not have the lobbying clout that the other industries have and hasn't done as good a job, quite frankly...for example, I've been a board member of CIRPA (Canadian Independent Record Producers Association) for years...we barely have enough money to keep an office open...and 3 people working in the office...let alone have people lobbying for more money. The multinationals have their own company, CRIA (Canadian Recording Industry Association), which are really funded by their parent companies and they don't really have the vested stake in the industry that the independents do. Plus its pretty hard for them (multinationals) to go and lobby Ottawa because if a band signs with Capitol or BMG the copyright is not owned by a Canadian, its owned by a multinational company...Capitol being owned by EMI, that's owned by a British company...Columbia owned by Sony, a Japanese company...that means a Canadian band's copyright isn't owned by a Canadian company. "Interview, May 1999"

Access to grant money is greatly limited and there is much competition for it. Many Canadian artists have to find other means of economic support for their product. "Bob" suggests that the situation is such that "people who rely on grants are not going to succeed". He states that musicians must find personal investors who believe in the potential product. He goes on to say, "the last album I produced had a $100,000 budget and not a dime of that came from the government."

Rick Unruh (Winnipeg Singer/Songwriter) has also benefitted from investors on his albums, however, he suggests that the system in Canada could be changed such that potential investors could have tax related incentives to invest in musicians' products. He states:

> There should be a tax break for investors in music such that if someone invests in my album, they don't pay taxes on it until the costs are recouped. This system already exists in other industries such as the Manitoba mining industry...which has a capitalization feature, a tax shelter...they only start paying taxes on that money once they make the money back. "Interview, May 1999"

It is often very difficult for amateur musicians, or professionals who do not have a lot of experience in the music industry that can be documented, to convince investors that the product will succeed. "Bob" puts it this way:

> Everybody knows, including sophisticated investors, that a record is an extremely long loss gamble, so they are not going to invest in a record unless it is demonstrated to them that this is a very high quality product...some research must show that the product has a reasonable chance of success in terms of distribution and marketing. "Interview, September 1999"

According to a 1989 Carcajou Research project done on the Alberta music industry, two of the nine main "barriers to the development of the music industry in Alberta" include the lack of people willing to invest in music projects and the lack of business skills on the part of musicians (Carcajou Research Ltd 1989).

Chapter 4
THE LOGIC OF THE SINGER/SONGWRITER'S WORLD

This chapter attempts to describe and reveal some of the many challenges that face the Singer/Songwriter as she works toward defining her status as a professional, developing and maintaining a target audience, understanding and suiting the expectations of media culture, and "imaging" herself through on and off stage promotional activity.

STRUGGLING FOR STATUS

The Singer/Songwriter can also be considered a liminal figure regarding his or her status as a professional versus a semi-professional or amateur player in the scene. According to the Canada Council "Grant Program Information" document, a professional artist is:

> someone who has specialized training in the field (not necessarily in academic institutions), who is recognized as such by his or her peers (artists working in the same artistic tradition), who has a commitment to devoting more time to artistic activity if financially feasible and who has a history of public presentation.

This relatively broad definition of a "professional" artist appears sufficiently wide-reaching enough to encompass almost any Canadian artist interested in applying for a federal grant. In spite of this broad definition of a "professional artist" there are few Singer/Songwriters in Canada who make their living exclusively from songwriting or performing. Big name artists such as Bruce Cockburn are able to rely on their own CD sales for financial stability while lesser known artists must find other

ways of procuring a living while staying focussed on the music industry. A commonly exploited resource in this regard is found in the realm of music publishing.

MUSIC PUBLISHING AS A RESOURCE

Music publishing within Canada is an important resource for Singer/Songwriters as it allows Canadian songwriters to receive royalties for their work without the necessity of extensive touring and travel. This is an especially important consideration within Canada since the geography of this country and the relatively small number of major urban centres makes extensive touring very difficult.

A music publisher is someone who issues licenses and collects royalties in exchange for a percentage of the money collected. The songwriter automatically owns 50% of the songs' generated royalties, which is non-negotiable in Canada, while the other 50% is negotiable according to the contract drafted by the parties in question. Therefore, the artist and publisher negotiate a breakdown of ownership, in percentages, and then it becomes the publisher's obligation to "find work" for the song/songs in question and collect/administer the subsequent royalties including public performance on TV, Radio, Film, in clubs and on recordings.

Geoffrey Hull suggests that there is a new model for music publishing, such that the publishers takes on the function of an A & R (Artist and Repertoire) department of a record label (Hull 1998: 55). He writes:

> (music publishers) actively seek songwriters who are, or have the potential to become, recording artists as well. They attempt to sign these songwriters to publishing deals before they are signed to record companies. The publisher may pay the songwriter/artist an advance in a form that allows them to

> develop their writing, arranging, and performing talents without having to keep a "day job." The publisher also helps the songwriter/artist seek recording and management contracts, even going so far as to use the publishing company's studios to create a master that can be released on an independent label in the hopes of selling 20,000 to 30,000 copies. In exchange for that development advance and the possibility of future royalties, the songwriter/artists pledge their output of songs for several years to the publisher.

Perhaps the most successful example of this tactic is Alanis Morissette, a high profile Canadian Singer/Songwriter, whose Jagged Little Pill album became the best selling debut album by a female artist when it passed the eight million copies mark in 1996. She had been signed to a publishing deal with MCA Music Publishing in Canada for seven years before her 1995 album debut. Hull goes on to explain that even in such developmental deals, the publishers often have to content themselves with a smaller share of the total publishing income by entering co-publishing deals with the Songwriter/Artist's publishing company (Hull 1998: 55).

In major international music centres such as Nashville there are thousands of professional songwriters, many of whom are not performers, who make a living from the songwriting craft. These artists sell their songs, via a publisher, to other artists and industry peers in television and film. There is a large market in such centres for this sort of work and many Canadian songwriters move there in order to make their living. In Canada, however, there are very few writers who are able to make their living from songwriting alone. Dan Hill is one example of an artist who can survive on songwriting alone, having written songs that are performed by Celine Dion and her high profile peers. Many of these songwriters are also Singer/Songwriters as they need to supplement their songwriting income with performance income and they benefit greatly from the connections that they obtain while performing.

TARGETING AN AUDIENCE

Another aspect of the Singer/Songwriter 's journey toward establishing and maintaining professional status is discovering and accessing a "target audience". When signed to a major label with sufficient financial backing, an artist is able to benefit from demographic studies and strategic marketing on a large scale corporate level. However, as an independent artist one is forced to rely upon various trial and error methods in order to decipher which kind of audience will be most appropriate for this particular artist's work. This is the point at which the various levels of Singer/Songwriter liminality become beneficial. The liminality and diverse talents and characteristics of the individual artist benefit her as she is able to slip from one context to the next always attempting to fit the situation as well as possible in order to decipher which ones will result in the highest amount of acceptance. This can be gauged through CD and merchandise sales, attendance, audience participation, compliments after the show, or re-bookings into the same venues. Through repeated situations in the same performance context the artist can put into effect subtle changes in her behaviour according to her perception of how she is being received by the audience. Through this process she learns what "works" and what does not "work" in each situation and which context she is best suited for.

Along with gearing their performance to suit their observations of audience reception Singer/Songwriters are also able to benefit from closely observing media culture such as that found in entertainment weeklies, magazines, and on TV.

SUITING THE EXPECTATIONS OF MEDIA CULTURE

Written media such as newspaper reviews and weekly entertainment guides often reveal many commonly held expectations about Singer/Songwriters. An example of genre expectations being acted out and revealed by the media occurred in an article that appeared in *The Calgary Straight* on February 24, 2000. The opening paragraph read as follows:

> Joel Kroeker isn't a typical Singer/Songwriter. Not in the James Taylor or Elliot Smith style, where wearing your heart on your sleeve and playing the part of the poor, broken, lone musician on stage is a pre-requisite to picking up an acoustic guitar. Sure, Kroeker may play an acoustic guitar and write honest lyrics, but musical wimps don't pick up the tag some of Kroeker's fans now give him -- 'the boy Ani Difranco.' (*The Calgary Straight*, February 24, 2000: 18)

This paragraph communicates many underlying expectations. First of all, that there is, in fact, a "typical Singer/Songwriter", and that Joel Kroeker is not one. She qualifies this immediately by giving a touchstone, James Taylor, to stylistically stream-line her representative example, and then describes who might fit into this category (i.e. - people who "wear their heart on their sleeve" and who "play the part of the poor, broken, lone musician") She then aligns the associative cues "acoustic guitar(s)" and "honest lyrics" with "wimp(iness)" and juxtaposes this with the mention of Ani Difranco.

Difranco's music falls within the Singer/Songwriter genre in that she predominates as the composer, singer and acoustic guitar player of her band and often performs alone. However, she is often considered unique within this genre due to her extremely aggressive style which can be perceived as an aesthetic element of her musical style but is also communicated through her pseudo-political lyricisms. In the

context of the Calgary Straight article, the words "Ani Difranco" signal this quality of aggressiveness, which, when applied to another Singer/Songwriter, implies that he too shares this quality of aggressiveness and is unique within the Singer/Songwriter genre. In this case this "aggressiveness" is the initial "angle" of the article but abruptly fades as "high-brow musical know-how" is introduced as a credibility legitimating device (i.e. "legit cred").

"Legit cred" is often established by musicians (including within the Singer/Songwriter genre) by describing one's musical training through the use of insider musical lingo or, as in this case, by affiliating oneself with some sort of academic institution. However, in folk and related genres such as blues and country, cred has traditionally been established by the overall image of the artist reflecting some sort of unique or particularly bohemian quality of lifestyle, often including no institutional musical training of any kind. An example of this image, as mentioned in the *Straight* article, might be a "poor, broken, lone musician" travelling from town to town obsessed with artistic expression regardless of its lack of financial return. A more contemporary take on this latter expression might be seen in the recent phase of female Singer/Songwriters such as Sarah McLachlan, Jewel, and what I will term the "**Lilith Fair** contingent" (*Lilith Fair* is a North American music festival, created by Canadian Singer/Songwriter Sarah McLachlan, that highlighted the music of female folk and pop artists). In a recent *Readers Digest* article on Jewel it was stated repeatedly that she was brought up poor and down and out but loved singing and songwriting so much that she never gave up on her dream in spite of its lack of financial return. Ironically, these songwriters pull in relatively large revenues and

thus the image of poverty is translated from a financial statement to an expression of general angst (i.e. poverty of spirit) usually tied to the working out of problems within one's love life or allusions to a more free way of living that is just out of grasp.

Alternately, in the *Calgary Straight* article, financial poverty and spiritual poverty are not used to legitimate credibility, but rather to create an image of the "norm" which is then used as a juxtaposition to the uniqueness of the artist in question, namely his "aggressiveness" and his schooling. At one point, after spelling out his resume of schooling, she writes, as a side note,"a pretty rich pedigree for a sensitive guy with a guitar." This comment seems to imply some sort of separation that exists between the academically oriented musician and the typical Singer/Songwriter (i.e. the "sensitive guy with the guitar"). It implies that there is something unique about this amount of schooling for someone in this genre.

The question then becomes: how will the artist respond to this sort of media critique? My theory is that the artist evaluates this media attention, picking up on salient elements that are touted as setting him apart from his peers such as "aggressiveness" and schooling as legit cred, and then appropriates these elements into his overall image onstage and off, which has a large impact upon many activities that he undergoes as an artist including promotion and composition. A "successful" independent artist who is able to procure a relatively large amount of local (or non-local) media attention has a better chance of discovering what is perceived as unique about their expression than an "un-successful" artist who rarely if ever receives media attention. Thus, the "successful" independent artist can operate as an A&R (artist and

repertoire) department of a major label might, revising and re-creating his image to suit the expectations and desires that are expressed in the media.

CHOOSING THE PROPER IMAGE

Within the Singer/Songwriter "genre" one of the main considerations regarding image involves the often contrasting elements of tradition versus innovation. The Singer/Songwriter category in Canada can quite easily be traced back to the expressions spurred on by the "folk music revival" of the 1960's when generic blending and fusion was not as prevalent. During this time period there was more emphasis on innovations in sound technology than there was on innovations in genre hybridity and style. In some instances the fusing of genres such as folk with heavy rock was considered anathema to the purity of the Singer/Songwriter's expression, as was displayed in the previously mentioned example regarding Bob Dylan bringing an electric guitar on stage and being booed by his fans. This attempt to fuse the sounds of modern rock with the high-brow lyrical prose of folk was considered an unwelcome innovation.

Many parallel innovations of genre have occurred recently with much less public outcry, which implies that this practice of genre hybridity has become more accepted by the general listening public. However, dialogue about Singer/Songwriters and their work still tends to reinforce the opposition between the "old" and the "new" elements within the genre. For example, the folk circuit as well as many of the folk festivals in Canada focus mainly on "trad folk" (traditional folk)

and on those artists that most closely resemble folk legends of old. Newer and more "quirky" Singer/Songwriters must rely on special "new music" nights in order to perform at these venues and cannot rely on consistent bookings within this circuit. This may be due in part to the audience that these folk clubs draw, which is usually an "older" crowd as opposed to the largely teenage crowd for young, generically hybrid Singer/Songwriters such as Ani Difranco and Ember Swift. The implication here is that this "older" middle-aged crowd is still projecting the aesthetic values from the 1960's requiring a purer generic expression as opposed to the celebration of generic hybridity expressed by younger audiences and consumers.

Therefore, the Singer/Songwriter often finds himself in a position where he must decide between a more traditional form of musical style and promotional image or a more innovative and hybrid style. This decision has obvious ramifications including venue choice and target audience. The "imaging" process that occurs through postering, songwriting, promotional picture creation, and stage talk seems to follow a general system which I will refer to as the logic of establishing and maintaining credibility. That is, the new artist will discover her "role" in the scene by the various methods discussed above, such as through media and audience observation, and then will work to establish herself through her public persona as an artist in a certain vein. For example, a new Singer/Songwriter with an aggressive and young presence might choose to capitalize on the image of Ani Difranco or Bob Wiseman as innovators in the field. They might do this by mentioning these artists in their promotional material ("Joel Kroeker has been compared to Ani Difranco"), or they might reference these artists during interviews ("Bob Wiseman has been a huge

influence in my work"). Another referential device occurs through the songwriting style of an artist who chooses to assimilate the stylistic characteristics of a particular artist into their own work. However, influential figures in one's personal musical history tend to show up in one's musical style regardless of any conscious stylistic inclusion on the part of the artist.

Once the artist has begun to identify and establish a particular image this persona can become a powerful voice during his creative songwriting moments. That is, many artists express the difficulty of trying to continue to write "for yourself" as opposed to writing "for a specific audience". For example, Steven Page of The Barenaked Ladies stated, "...we were aware that if we tried to write for success we could be in trouble...I think that when you start writing what you think people want to hear, that's when you start compromising what you're all about" (SOCAN September 1998: 11). This sort of lingo implies a sense of honesty or "authenticity" of self that a Singer/Songwriter should strive for when composing their music. The implication is that there is a "true" self within us and when this "self" is strayed from with the intention of pleasing a different "self" not our own one has committed an inauthentic expression. (i.e. we have compromised what is "true")

This is a particularly interesting conundrum when dealing with an artist's musical education and background. Early in the 20th century folk musicians rarely had any formal musical education and the music they produced was done mainly through improvisation and oral teaching. Now, however it has become common for musicians who are considered folk musicians, such as Singer/Songwriters, to have vast amounts of musical training ranging from private lessons on an instrument to

decades of institutional professional training in multiple disciplines. It is not uncommon for Singer/Songwriters to have highly developed skills in sight reading, chart reading, written composition and historical musical form. In light of this present reality a Singer/Songwriter must decide during the imaging process how he will present himself in this regard. Many traditionalists who tend to exhibit a nostalgic longing for past traditions will fetishize artists who display the image of the "hard done by" folkie who travels from town to town with no known formal education but with unmistakable raw talent and an aptitude for telling stories in song. (I'll call this the "my red guitar, three chords and the truth" stereotypology) In stark contrast to this, there exist present day Singer/Songwriters with background in Jazz and Classical music who display a great deal of complexity within their arrangements, songwriting and abilities.

Regarding the earlier mention of "truth" and "uncompromising commitment to self", many music consumers express the notion that "authentic" folk is done by musicians who have vast amounts of non-formal musical experience. That is, in the folk world, an artist can gain credibility and respect by projecting an image of an honest, hard-working musician who is true to "self", but this same artist may lose credibility in the "trad folk" or "authentic folk" world by presenting an image of an equally hard-working academic who has vast amounts of formal musical training. One implication here is that the formal education may somehow taint the artist's adherence to a "true" expression of self resulting in an expression that is highly suspect.

Another implication that radiates from this complex of behaviour is that the issue of "authenticity" within folk music is largely an economic one. That is, the idea of academic training often carries with it a connotation of a subsequent socio-economic status that is "higher" than the socio-economic status associated with the (largely mythological) travelling Singer/Songwriter (folk musician). It appears that the artist whose image best suits the mythology of the "hard done by folkie" is the one who is most often celebrated and, subsequently, has the best chance for success within the folk genre. Examples of relatively successful Singer/Songwriters who are marketed in this way include Bill Bourne (Edmonton) and Bob Snider (Toronto).

THE IMPORTANCE OF APPEARING INDEPENDENT

Along with the Singer/Songwriter's need to fulfil certain expectations regarding "authenticity", they must also navigate suspicions regarding certain alliances that they may have with corporate bodies such as record labels and investors. The concept of independence from these bodies is an important one for the Singer/Songwriter in a number of different aspects including independence from the band and from industry affiliation.

First of all, Singer/Songwriters are often considered a "one man band" (or, as Ani Difranco puts it "a one woman army") since they write their own music and, at least early in their career, promote themselves and hire all accompanying musicians and helpers. This aspect of solo-ness which characterizes the Singer/Songwriter genre becomes particularly poignant in the naming process. At some point in

Singer/Songwriters' careers they must decide upon a professional name for themselves or their band. Often Singer/Songwriters will use their own given names (with minor alterations such as Paul Bellous becoming Paul Bellows or Maren Ord becoming Maren) and will hire musicians who remain "nameless" during performance and within promotional literature. Countless examples exist of Singer/Songwriters who are promoted as solo artists but who tour and record with a band regularly. Examples of this phenomenon include Ani Difranco, Sarah McLachlan, Martin Sexton, and Ron Sexsmith. This aspect of "solo-ness" appears to be a significant element within the ethos of Singer/Songwriter marketing.

In performance, the Singer/Songwriter tends to act as MC for the show, thus relegating all other band members to subordinate positions. It is uncommon in this genre for a band member to address the audience unless it is to contribute something that is invited by, or directly related to, the Singer/Songwriter leader. The underlying premise for this situation lies in the fact that the Singer/Songwriter writes all or most of the material himself and presumably is able to perform it alone. Therefore, the band is hired and does not regularly experience the same level of interaction or band camaraderie as, for example, a touring pop band might experience. The Singer/Songwriter is the creator, promoter and originator of the project and is therefore the "hero" and leader.

A major concern in the life of the Singer/Songwriter is the issue of one's affiliation with industry institutions such as record labels, publishers, management and booking agencies. There is a growing strain within the Singer/Songwriter genre that is considered the "independent" route. Examples of artists in this vein include

Ani Difranco, Ember Swift and Loreena McKennitt. The artist can gain credibility by displaying a public persona devoid of affiliation with industry institutions such as major record labels. The artist is then considered independent from corporate sponsorship and is thus deemed as having "indie cred".

Another important issue is ownership. The Singer/Songwriter's "product" is the songs that he or she creates which are sought after by industry players on many levels. The songs contain a "writer's share" which consists of 50% of all income that is generated from the songs, and a publisher's share which is negotiable but can include the other 50% of all income generated from the songs. This income is generated from the artist's songs being used in film, commercials, on TV, or by the song being recorded by other artists.

With Singer/Songwriters considered to be part of the "independent" route, a significant part of their public persona revolves around their independence and full ownership of their material. Any hint of an alliance with a major corporation such as Sony or Warner Brothers is often considered "selling out". An example of this took place at the 1998 Winnipeg Folk Festival when during a performance by Ani Difranco, a much celebrated "independent" Singer/Songwriter, some of her "fans" began chanting "Sony sucks!" revealing their displeasure with the recent rumours of Difranco's distribution alliance with a subsidiary of the Sony Corporation.

To "sell out" is to become "commercial" or to appear to be more concerned with economic issues than with artistic integrity. It is as if the artist's integrity should be of a higher quality than that of average society. That is, the businessperson, the salesperson, and the hotel manager can relate the majority of their personal decisions to financial

needs resulting in great wealth but the artist must remain "pure" and "true to her art and her political mission". It is as if the investment that the consumer makes, both financially and emotionally, in the "star" should activate a reciprocal devotion to artistically satisfying one's fans and that any acknowledgement on the part of the "star" of financial benefit is seen as a selfish ulterior motive and a breach of this sacred contract.

AUTHENTICITY

This issue of "selling out" naturally leads to discussions of "authenticity" since the act of identifying a "sell out" implies a move from something "authentic" to something "less authentic". In the realm of "folk music", or more particularly "urban folk", that includes musicians such as Bruce Cockburn, Stephen Fearing, and Martin Sexton, "authenticity" is tied to levels of intimacy, both lyrically and stylistically. Taylor states this strain of "authenticity" as "sincerity or fidelity to a true self...(or) sincerity as credibility" (Taylor 1997: 26). This notion tends to reveal itself in statements about the emotionality of the performer. A performance that is perceived as "emotional" or "filled with passion" is often considered to be "sincere" and "authentic". According to Frith the very power of 1960's folk music, the progenitor of modern "urban folk", was found in the performer's ability to demonstrate a personal emotional experience (Frith 1983: 48, Taylor 1997: 24).

The concept of "authenticity" has become a hot topic in the world of popular music research and theory. Walter Benjamin writes about the reproduction of works

of art and how the reproduced work does not necessarily lose its authentic "aura" or beauty (Benjamin 1973: 226). Theodor Adorno demonstrates more of a purist viewpoint having theorized at length about the "standardisation" and "pseudo-individualization" that exists within popular music and the destruction of the "authentic" article (Adorno 1991: 303). Dominic Strinati states:

> The notion of authenticity is clearly associated with how mass culture theory conceives of the past. It can be argued that this romantic conception of the past is not fanciful but merely an attempt to show us what has been lost, and the consequences for us today. Yet it is difficult to resist the conclusion that an idealized 'golden age', in which an authentic folk culture and a truly great high culture knew their places in an ordered world, is an intrinsic part of mass culture theory. If this is so, we can question the way the theory overestimates the past and underestimates the present. (Strinati 1995: 44).

In order to describe more clearly the role authenticity plays in the Singer/Songwriter's milieu it is helpful to compare it with other genres of music. Mainstream rock, as an umbrella genre, appears to have a different criteria for "authenticity". For example, in the genre of rock that includes bands such as Motley Crüe, Van Halen, and Guns'n'Roses notions of "authenticity" are closely tied to the perceived lifestyle and personality of the musicians. Consumers of this genre allow, and sometimes expect, musicians to have wide-ranging fame and vast amounts of money. Very little attention is paid to the physical location of the band's origins or their means of production used in the creation of their latest album. As long as these musicians appear to be wild, carefree, and excessive, other issues are largely ignored (Berger 1999: 38).

The stark contrast between the "folkie" focus on intimacy and the "rocker" focus on other issues is vividly displayed in the venues chosen for the two genres and the amplification techniques that are employed. Heavy rock concerts are commonly held in large arenas holding 10,000 or more screaming fans. Extremely powerful amplification

is used with boosted low end frequencies and ear-splitting decibels that can be felt viscerally. The lyrics themselves are often completely incomprehensible due to the form of amplification and the textural relation between voice and instruments. However, much of the lyrical content, especially choruses and "hits", will have been memorized from CDs and the radio allowing fans to mouth the words at appropriate moments thus solidifying their identity as "insiders" to the rock culture and allowing them to take part in the generated sensations of power. The volume and perceived electric display of power contributes to the general sense of reckless abandon and "wildness" that the band attempts to present from the stage. "Folk" concerts, on the other hand, are usually much smaller venues (unless they are held outdoors such as Canadian folk festivals) with amplification techniques that employ a more balanced range of frequencies, allowing more sonic clarity to be designated to specific instruments and especially to the voice.

This emphasis on the voice contributes to the difference in formal structure between rock and urban folk. Rock music often presents a very repetitive chorus that is broken up by short verses and instrumental breaks while urban folk tends to focus more on the songwriting aspect having more non-chorus lyrical sections with more emphasis placed on communicating a detailed verbal message or narrative. One could imagine that exchanging venues and amplification systems between the two genres would result in non-communicative, "boomy" folk music and impotent rock music that has been stripped of its spectacular power and thus forced to rely on its lyrical content for meaning

In the realm of rap music Taylor suggests that "(consumers) want 'real' gangsta rap musicians - black, poor, from the hood - not middle-class ones, and certainly not

white ones" (Taylor 1997: 23). To a large extent this is also true with consumers of "authentic" blues. In both genres there are exceptions such as the Beastie Boys and Stevie Ray Vaughan but in both of these cases the musicians go to great lengths to market themselves as people whose personalities are inline with the "authentic spirit" of the genre. For example, one of Vaughan's album covers shows him leaning against an old, presumably stalled, car in the middle of a desert playing his scuffed, beat-up guitar implying poverty, bad luck, down-and-out-ness, and an irrational passion for "the blues" even in the face of misfortune. If musicians from "privileged classes" want to find success within these genres they must "prove themselves worthy of respect" by presenting themselves in a way that can be seen as aligned with common perceptions of "authentic" behaviour and personality.

Part of the motivation behind the desire to create hierarchies of "authenticity" may be found in what Appadurai terms as our state of "postblurred" genres (Appadurai 1996). Our genres overlap to such a degree and are affected and influenced by so many diverse factors that we are unable to trace them to a discernible root. So we struggle to re-classify "original-ness" in order to make sense of the diverse environment of artistic creation that surrounds us. Boundaries of culture and difference are being lifted due to a proliferation of transportation and communications technology making the world both smaller and bigger at the same time. It is becoming smaller in that we are now able to travel to and communicate with any part of the earth. It is becoming bigger in that, suddenly, our view of the communal "We" is expected to include billions of people we have never met and our realm of "possibilities" is paralyzingly large.

The liminal un-bound quality of scenes, as noted by Olsen, relates closely to Appadurai's notion of "scapes", particularly "ethnoscapes": the landscapes of people on the move from place to place that represent the world we live in (Appadurai 1996: 51). For example, presently in Edmonton there is a disproportionately large number of displaced Winnipeg Singer/Songwriters (e.g. Paul Bellous, Ben Sures, and Dale Nikkel). This Singer/Songwriter migration pattern from Winnipeg to Edmonton is a significant one since these two geographical places have distinct scenes but the Singer/Songwriters within them tend to be able to pass from one scene to the next with very little difficulty. The two Singer/Songwriters interviewed who have made this move recently suggested that, although these scenes are distinct in some respects, it has been relatively easy to move from one into the other.

PROMOTION AND THE SINGER/SONGWRITER

Examples reflecting this blurring and post-blurring quality as well as other significant information such as genre affiliation can often be registered through observing gig promo, posters found on lamp posts and public spaces allocated for sign posting. Since many indie Singer/Songwriters do not have the economic resources or institutional backing to allow for highly professional looking promo, they must rely on other marketing ploys. Many techniques are used to try to catch the eye of passersby, such as bright coloured paper or explicitly sexual or gruesome images. However, cost is always a major factor in determining how the poster will look in the end, resulting in an overwhelming majority of simple, black and white, photocopied, 8.5 X 11 inch sheets,

plastering much of a city's available promo space. Often, a quick glance at a gig poster can cue, with reasonable accuracy, the genre of music that it attempts to promote, even when this information is not explicitly stated. High-profile gig promo for mainstream musicians with institutional support gives the most obvious cues with their glossy, high-quality reproductions and expensive looking presentation. These usually stick out when put against a backdrop of lower-quality promo.

It is also interesting to note *where* in the city gig promo is placed. These choices sometimes reveal clues as to the intended target market that a Singer/Songwriter is trying to reach. For example, in Winnipeg, I noticed three main sections of the city where the largest amalgamations of posters could be found:

1) The exchange district, which is a "red light district" in the process of revivification.
2) Portage avenue and the Westminster area...which is touted as the "hippie-hempy, buddhisty-yuppie" area.
3) Osborne Village/Corydon Avenue...which is a teen to college age small-scale version of Greenwich Village in New York.

Obviously, these are high traffic areas, and therefore, are good for promotion purposes. However, there are other high traffic areas in the city that are largely ignored for this purpose. For example, Main Street and the North End are nearly vacant of gig promo. This area is notorious for its real or imagined, gang activity, poor residents (usually of non-North American ethnicity), and unemployment. Tuxedo, considered to be one of the "upper-class" neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, is another area that is almost entirely barren of gig promo, in spite of its perceived economic potential. It seems obvious that the residents of these areas are not targeted as consumers of live music, by Singer/Songwriters and bands who use streetlamp promo.

COVER ART AND PROMOTIONAL DESIGN

Regarding the power images and representations have in shaping the way we see things, David Clarke writes:

> It has become a cliche of contemporary writing that the city is constructed as much by images and representations as by the built environment, demographic shifts and patterns of capital investment...images and representations inform our sense of both self and reality (and) are a crucial factor in the reproduction and contestation of existing social practices. (Clarke 1997 :187).

Clarke suggests that cinema has "codified and normalized the observer within rigidly defined systems of visual consumption, thus establishing *vision* as the master sense of the modern era". He goes on to say that the lifestyles of the inhabitants of the post-modern city are increasingly geared to pleasures of sensation without consequences. So we *see*, but we don't wholly sympathize with the image.

In Semiotic terminology, the association of the signifier and the signified is called the "sign". Roland Barthes argues that a sign can form a myth, thus representing a whole range of cultural values, which carry connotations, engendering emotions (Shuker 1998: 290). I propose that this association of the signifier and the signified (resulting in the "sign") and its subsequent development into a personal "mythology" is a significant process regarding the Singer/Songwriter's attempts to align himself with a specific genre identity and subsequent target audience. That is, the process of naming/defining and the creation and maintenance of "lingo" that surrounds the artist generates an "active personal mythology" which informs him to a large degree as to

his role and "place" within the scene. This conception of his role and place informs other decisions regarding target market and promotional activity.

Barthes suggests that a photographic image is a "message without a code" (Barthes 1991: 3), and that this inert object (the photo) is transformed into a language by perceiving and interpreting it. He separates the analogon quality of the photo, that is the photo as an analogy of reality, from the style of reproduction, and comes up with the concepts of a denoted message, which is the analogon, and a connoted message, which is how the viewer interprets the analogon.

Within the world of Singer/Songwriter **promo** there are some CD covers and promotional designs that display seemingly obvious denotative messages. For example, a CD cover or poster with a picture of a middle-aged man wearing a cowboy hat and holding a guitar with the words,"Buck Cowboy playing at the Longhorn Saloon" might appear to be a blatant attempt at targeting a "country music" crowd. However, in our present state of post-blurring, there exist many alternate readings to such a seemingly obvious message. First of all, this could be read as irony. That is, the obviousness of the image might be signalling those in the know that this concert will highlight an opposing genre to the one presented (I will call this the indie Kitsch-22 technique). This technique employs images and signs that are so blatantly mainstream that they are used as trash novelty (i.e. Kitsch) for promoting to subcultural groups.

Another alternate reading of this promotional image might reside within the realm of "retro" promotional techniques. "Retro" refers to a style of an earlier time that is being revived or hinted at for some ulterior motive. The man with the cowboy hat

could be seen as an attempt at a retro portrayal thus signaling something other than a traditionally country genre.

The "art" of promoting Singer/Songwriters does not appear to lie within the realism with which the Singer/Songwriter is portrayed. On the contrary, the success of a promotional design is found in its ability to draw people into the active mythology of the songwriter. It is meant to present the songwriter as larger than life and to energize and reinforce existing pleasing associations that potential audience members might have regarding the folk world, the music industry, the entertainment industry, life on the road. The active personal mythology that surrounds the songwriter regarding his role and place in the music world contributes to the promotional efforts in that it provides a basic "image framework" to which other promotional considerations can relate.

Singer/Songwriters will often use images (both visual and verbal) of geographic locations to bring up associations that their target audience might have with those locations. Therefore, location becomes an important semiotic cue for the Singer/Songwriter who hopes to convey the right image. Regarding cover art and visual promotion, when a scene begins to gain popularity it is commonly marketed to a target audience by simply combining visuals from that geographic location with a specific style of representation. The movie "Singles" is an example, as it portrays the beginning of the Seattle grunge scene, including location, clothing styles, music styles and even lifestyles that are equated with Grunge.

Indie releases also often use local scenes (possibly, as a potential connection point to local fans). For example, in Winnipeg, an independent Singer/Songwriter named Richard Moody has an album depicting a Winnipeg cityscape. Also from

Winnipeg the Watchmen have had shots of Winnipeg hotels, and Neil Young often makes reference on albums to the infamous Blue Note Cafe in Winnipeg where he got his start.

WHO DOES THE WORK?

A&R departments claim the role of designing and rendering cover art for major labels and large indie labels. For smaller indie labels and unsigned Singer/Songwriters and bands, the recording artist him/herself will often have a large role in the layout and design of the cover art, but will almost always hire the help of someone else who specializes in visual art of some kind.

This brings up the issue of how high-profile professional Singer/Songwriters are marketed versus how relatively unknown musicians market themselves. Ani Difranco, a Singer/Songwriter who was recently somewhere in the middle, claims to do most of the work herself, including the conceptualization process. This is not the case for most artists who, like her, are selling 3/4 of a million albums. People who sell that much are usually part of a major label, which means they have A&R departments to conceptualize album covers.

This is sometimes more perceptible with bands who have put out a few albums on their own and then get signed with a major label. For example, Martin Sexton put out "In the Journey" in 1990 on his own, then got signed to Atlantic (Time Warner) and put out "The American" in 1998. The latter is much fancier and expensive looking, and more cohesive as a package.

Chapter 5
CONCLUSION

After reviewing issues and perspectives regarding the cultural world view and surrounding situation of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter we gain a greater understanding of the liminality of this figure and his relationship to the larger Canadian music industry milieu that surrounds them. This liminality benefits the Singer/Songwriter in particular, as this category is not as rigidly defined as others, thus allowing him to base himself within the genre of folk while freely crossing genre barriers. This liminality allows him to expand his potential target audience, the number of potential venues that he can perform in, and the musical landscape within which he creates his art.

It seems from this study that there exist systems of behaviour within this music industry ~~necessi~~tating Singer/Songwriters to follow specified paths of distribution, marketing, relational models, and authenticity projection in order to find consistent success within their field. Even in the case of non-mainstream (i.e. independent) artists their ambiguous status allows them to gear their compositional and promotional material to suit perceived institutional (and non-institutional) expectations of genre, national identity and aesthetic.

Regarding genre this is done through maintaining ties to a number of different genres including Folk and Pop and their various subgenres. Musically, this occurs by the Singer/Songwriter employing musical cues that signal a specific genre affiliation such as chord structure and instrumentation. But it is also done through promotional techniques such as stating one's influences and idols in biographical

material (i.e. "Songwriter X is greatly influenced by Bruce Cockburn and Joni Mitchell), or by displaying genre specific visual images on posters (i.e. the stereotypical folkie promo shot of a guy, smiling, holding an acoustic guitar in a field). Through these musical and promotional techniques the Singer/Songwriter is able to alter her image according to new information that she receives from various experiences with media and the public. That is, the Singer/Songwriter may read a review of her CD, hear an interview of herself on the radio, or have a conversation with an audience member that yields new information regarding the expectations and desires that are placed upon her. The Singer/Songwriter's ambiguity thus allows her the freedom and range of movement to alter her output to suit these newly understood demands in order to further succeed and gain popularity within her field.

The Singer/Songwriter also maintains an ambiguous profile regarding national identity. That is, he is able to reap the benefits of being a Canadian working in Canada (i.e. qualify for Canadian Content and receive government grant money), but he is also able to cross national borders and fit in quite naturally in the United States and Europe since those Singer/Songwriter "scenes" are equally ambiguous regarding genre. This issue of national identity is an interesting one in that the ambiguity of the Singer/Songwriter category allows them access to a number of different international scenes as well as allowing them relative freedom to act within those scenes according to the different logics within each scene. For example, within Canada the Canadian Singer/Songwriter is able to create and maintain a "hometown" image by way of mentioning Canadian geographical place names in songs and stage talk or by displaying some aspect of the "quirkiness" of Canadian music. However, this same

Singer/Songwriter, when touring in the United States or Europe, is able to develop or assimilate a more "international sound" that does not give away one's Canadian nationality as immediately, thus allowing more room for varied and diverse readings of their image/music and potentially more wide-scale success. (for instance, The Mike Plume Band who are from Edmonton but now work in Nashville) The Singer/Songwriter category is wide open enough to allow for this national ambiguity when necessary.

The issue of gearing one's compositional and promotional material to suit perceived institutional expectations of aesthetic is closely related to genre. The Singer/Songwriter category allows the artist freedom to adjust aesthetic elements of her "show", her music and her promo in order to more successfully fulfill the "rules of taste" (aesthetic) of a specific scenario or context. That is, he is able to gauge certain expectations that the crowd may have of him (according to the audiences' response, general age, gender, race or other cultural cues) and then adjust his stage talk, song choice, playing style or clothing to suit the context without stepping outside of the Singer/Songwriter category.

Although initiatives such as the Canadian Content Regulations have tended to shape some aspects of the Singer/Songwriter's tradition of expression, this study has shown that the history and stated intentions of the broadcasting industry and subsequent cultural initiatives within Canada are not perceived as fully beneficial by Singer/Songwriters working in the Western Canadian scene. Singer/Songwriters' comments regarding the benefits and lack of benefits of certain cultural initiatives that exist within the Canadian music industry, such as the Canadian Content Regulations,

display a gap of understanding between the views held by creators of these cultural initiatives and the actual reality of the Singer/Songwriter's situation. That is, the Singer/Songwriters' comments above suggest that government decision-makers do not fully understand the present realities of being an aspiring Singer/Songwriter in Canada and thus the initiatives that exist to help them are outdated and ineffective.

Although the focus of this study has not been directly on "the music itself", rather on the targetting of one's musical and non-musical expression in order to fulfill expectations and the situating of these practices within relevant social, cultural and economic contexts, it does contribute to the general knowledge of the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter's situation and cultural surroundings as they actively guide their utterances through the surrounding liminal mist of pitfalls and opportunities in hopes of lasting success.

GLOSSARY

AFA - The Alberta Foundation for the Arts provides grant programs that are designed to encourage and assist Alberta's artists and provide public access to the arts.

Alt Country - a form of country music which tends to include some aspects of an "indie" aesthetic, highlighting the independence of the artist and their uniqueness as opposed to the largely mainstream aesthetic of most of the country music world.

A&R Department - Artist and Repertoire department of a record label. Responsible for working with acts that are already under contract, and for finding new talent (Shuker, 1998).

Avant-Garde - usually applies to innovative new movements in art, often associated with breaks with established traditions, styles and convention (Shuker 1998). In music, this term usually refers to "serious music traditions" as opposed to popular music.

CanCon - Canadian Content Regulations for radio began on October 1, 1970. These initial regulations stated that a minimum of 30% of all musical compositions broadcast by radio stations during certain specified periods would have to meet at least one of the following four conditions:

a) the playing or singing (or both) of the composition must be principally by a Canadian
b) the music was written by a Canadian
c) the lyrics were written by a Canadian
d) the performance was produced in Canada (*Press Release: Television Programs 1970*).

CRTC - The Canadian Radio and Television Telecommunications Commission is an independent agency, operates at "arms length" from government, reporting directly to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage. This commission presently regulates "over 5,600 licensed broadcasters including AM and FM radio, television, cable, pay and specialty television, Direct-to-Home satellite systems, Multipoint Distribution Systems, Subscription Television, and Pay Audio". The CRTC also regulates "over 85 telecommunications common carriers, including all major Canadian telephone companies and satellite service providers" (*A Short History of Broadcasting* 1997).

Electro-Acoustic - Any music that is produced, changed, or reproduced by electronic means.

Emo - post-grunge, emotionally charged "indie" pop music. A Seattle-based buzz-word.

Ethnoscape - "Landscapes of group identity" (i.e. transcending locality). Appadurai suggests that we might substitute this term for "earlier wholes such as villages, communities, and localities" (Appadurai 1996).

FACTOR - A Federal, non profit foundation that provides funds for the Canadian recording industry through grant money.

Folk Music - According to the 1996 CD-Rom *Music Central* Folk is "simple, direct, acoustic-based music that draws upon the experiences, concerns, and lore of the common people". But as Roy Shuker alludes, "it can be argued that all popular music is a form of folk music" (Shuker 1998).

Indie label - Small record labels that are independent from the major labels regarding artist acquisition and promotion (Shuker 1998).

Lilith Fair - A North-American music festival, created by Canadian Singer Sarah McLachlan, that highlighted the music of female folk and pop artists. The final year of the festivals three year run was 1999.

Liminal - Threshold. Of or at the point where one perception or condition blends or crosses over into another. (Webster's)

Major Label - Thorn/EMI (UK-based), Bertelsmann (Germany), Philips (Holland), MCA Canadian-owned), Time/Warner (USA), and Sony (Japan).

MARIA - The Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association

MP3 File - MP3 files allow artists to upload their music, or someone else's music, onto a file that can be downloaded through the internet by people who are equipped with a modem, network access, a sound card and decompression software, resulting in a relatively high quality reproduction.

New Age/World - "More of a mood than a style...based on the softer kinds of classical, jazz and folk" (Hardy and Laing 1990) Commonly marked by minute variations and an abundance of repeats (Shuker 1998). See Wyndham Hill and Nerada labels for examples.

Post-Blurred Genres - a state after which genre categories no longer hold well defined and easily observable boundaries due to their appropriation and double entendre (Appadurai 1996: 51).

Promo - Promotional activity and material such as posters, pictures, articles, and press-releases.

Rave culture - general term applied to the phenomenon of raves, which are clubs

held outside established dance venues. The main music at raves is techno and other variants of dance-music (Shuker 1998).

Roots - Often a genre-specific term, used in relation to styles such as folk, blues, and various world musics (Shuker 1998).

Royalties - a share of the proceeds or product paid to the owner of a right, as a patent, for permission to use it or operate under it (Webster's).

Scenes - (According to Will Straw) these are "that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (Straw 1991: 373).

Semiotics - a general theory of signs and symbols; especially the analysis of the nature and relationships of signs in language, usually including three branches, syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics (Webster's).

Singer/Songwriter - artists who both write and perform their material, and who are able to perform solo, usually on acoustic guitar or piano (Shuker 1998).

SOCAN - The Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada collects and distributes royalty money and provides funding generally intended for not-for-profit events and projects.

The Canada Council for the Arts - A Federal agency that provides a reange of programs to assist Canadian artist, bands, ensembles and arts organizations with their artistic pursuits.

WorldBeat - World music became prominent in the late 1980's, as a label applied to popular music originating outside the Anglo-American nexus. The term was launched in 1987 as a new category of popular music by eleven independent British, European, and Amercian record labels specializing in music from Third World countries. In the United States, the term world beat is used rather than world music (Shuker 1998).

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APPENDIX 1

CANADIAN CONTENT REGULATIONS (CANCON) AND A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF RADIO BROADCASTING IN CANADA

Within the Canadian popular music industry there are cultural initiatives whose stated intentions are to aid artist development, and nurture the industry at all levels. For example, the Canadian Content Regulations (CanCon), as they apply to radio broadcasting, are an attempt at industry development through statutory means. Some practicing singer/songwriters claim that the CanCon regulations are of substantial benefit to the Canadian music industry, while others claim that these regulations serve only high-profile Canadian musicians and "superstars". In order to clarify this issue, it is helpful to begin with a brief history of broadcasting in Canada.

Public broadcasting in Canada began in 1920, although the Radiotelegraph Act of 1913 allowed for the first experimental broadcasting licence in 1918 (*A Short History of Broadcasting* 1997). By 1928 there were an estimated 400,000 radio receiving sets in Canada, many of which were tuned to American stations, considered by many Canadian listeners to offer superior and more varied programming. As a result, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries submitted a report to the Privy Council warning that something should be done so that Canadian stations could remain competitive. The report recommended the establishment of more powerful radio stations throughout Canada. It also recommended that a royal commission be appointed to prepare a report on the state of broadcasting in Canada (*A Short History of Broadcasting* 1997).

This concern with international competition continued to surface in discussions of Canadian broadcasting. In 1932 Prime Minister Bennett appointed a Parliamentary Committee to create a commission suitable for implementing a national broadcasting strategy, resulting in the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC). The CRBC, with its mandate to extend coverage to all settled parts of Canada, failed to live up to expectations, due to "unworkable administrative arrangements, lack of independent funding, political vulnerability and lack of co-operation from some of the private stations" (Marsh 1985:270-1). As a result, a new Canadian Broadcasting Act was passed in 1936, thus creating the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a national organization with a "more effective corporate structure and greater operational and financial autonomy"(Marsh 1985:271).

In 1958, on the recommendation of the Fowler Commission that a body, separate from the CBC, be created to regulate broadcasting, the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG) took over the CBC's regulatory role. The BBG's mandate was to promote and develop "Canadian talent, content, and character"(*A Short History of Broadcasting* 1997) .The Fowler Broadcasting Committee, appointed in 1964, contributed to this end, focussing on the dominance of American content in programming. The Fowler Broadcasting Committee's recommendations eventually led the Liberal government to pass the Broadcasting Act of 1968, thus replacing the BBG with the Canadian Radio Television Commission (CRTC). The CRTC had greater authority and a clearer mandate than the BBG, and was to "ensure that

ownership and control of broadcasting remained in Canadian hands, that programming would be of high quality, with substantial Canadian content, and that Canadian broadcasting would serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the nation of Canada from sea to sea" (*A Short History of Broadcasting* 1997).

The present CRTC was established in 1976 when Parliament transferred jurisdiction over telecommunications to the CRTC from the Canadian Transport Commission, thus forming the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) (*Guide to the CRTC* 1992:1). This commission presently regulates "over 5,600 licensed broadcasters including AM and FM radio, television, cable, pay and specialty television, Direct-to-Home satellite systems, Multipoint Distribution Systems, Subscription Television, and Pay Audio". The CRTC also regulates "over 85 telecommunications common carriers, including all major Canadian telephone companies and satellite service providers" (*A Short History of Broadcasting* 1997).

The CRTC, as an independent agency, operates at "arms length" from government, reporting directly to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CANCON

One response to continued concerns regarding Canadian competition with the United States has been the CRTC's establishment of Canadian Content regulations. For radio stations in Canada, these began on October 1, 1970. These initial regulations stated that a minimum of 30% of all musical compositions broadcast by radio stations during certain specified periods would have to meet at least one of the following four conditions:

a) the playing or singing (or both) of the composition must be principally by a Canadian
b) the music was written by a Canadian
c) the lyrics were written by a Canadian
d) the performance was produced in Canada (*Press Release: Television Programs, 1970).*

After one year, the regulation changed, stating that two of these criteria would have to be met for the music to qualify as Canadian content, and the percentage of Canadian content required on radio broadcasts has since been raised to 35% (Romanow 1974:76).

APPENDIX 2

MYSELF AS A SINGER/SONGWRITER: A CASE STUDY

By using my own situation as a case study I intend to help clarify some of the realities faced by the Western Canadian Singer/Songwriter (based in Edmonton) on a daily basis. As a professional Singer/Songwriter working mainly in Western Canada I deal with many of the realities laid out in this study on a daily basis. For example, when I was in the creation process of my debut CD in 1999 entitled *Naive Bohemian* I had to find grant money and to take into account issues of Canadian Content to make sure that my music could gain wide exposure in Canada through radio play. Some of the funding came from Manitoba Film and Sound (for the music recorded in Winnipeg) while the rest of the money/ studio time came as an award for winning the Brass Monkey Singer/Songwriter Competition in Edmonton. (Note: I have since received FACTOR money in order to produce an upgraded demo which has proven handy for getting more gigs.)

Once *Naive Bohemian* was finished and had been manufactured I had to create a "buzz" (i.e. – develop interest in the CD from widely varying sources including media and the public) somehow about it in order to inform potential "fans" that it was available (and interesting!). This was done through a formal release process including a "CD Release Party" which was held at a club in Edmonton called The City Media Club. Informing people of this event involved a full press blitz including setting up interviews in all of the local papers, having critics review the CD, doing TV appearances, performing live spots on local radio stations, doing in-store performances in participating record stores, and compiling a city-wide database of media (and other "important" folks) that needed to be included in the press release/ invitation send out. Often this work is done by a publicist whom the Singer/Songwriter will hire for a one time fee. I chose to do all of this work myself since I had recently moved to Edmonton from Winnipeg and felt that this work would help to acquaint me with Edmonton's music community.

As soon as *Naive Bohemian* was "out there" and people were showing interest in purchasing it I needed to obtain some sort of distribution deal in order to make sure that the CD would be in the record store in each city or town that I performed in before I got there. Shortly after the release party I signed a deal with Spirit River Distribution who now handles my distribution on a national level in Canada for the album *Naive Bohemian*. Once the distribution deal was in place it became important to tour extensively in Western Canada in order to raise the awareness of my existence as a Singer/Songwriter in territories that had not heard my music. This touring began immediately after the release party and included many centres between Winnipeg and Victoria including Vancouver, Surrey, Nanaimo, Burnaby, Courtenay, Campbell River, Fernie, Calgary, Ft. McLeod, Lethbridge, Brandon, Saskatoon and Regina. (to name just a few) These gigs ranged from playing in small coffee shops to playing on the mainstage of festivals with 6000+ in attendance.

Another form of venue which are usually smaller but highly sought after are called "showcases". These are performances where the artist is rarely paid but gains exposure very quickly since they are commonly attended by record label reps, media

big wigs and "buyers" for soft seat venues (as opposed to bars and clubs) such as those found at Universities and Colleges. The most recent showcase that I have performed at was the (ARIA) Alberta Recording Industry Association Awards Show in June of 2000.

I considered myself a marked outsider and was not aware of my perceived "insider-ness" (i.e. as an Edmontonian Singer/Songwriter) until I was awarded the title of "Best New Artist of the Year 1999" from ARIA and was subsequently told by a veteran Edmontonian Singer/Songwriter that "everyone thinks you're from around here". I was always careful at gigs in Edmonton to reveal my Winnipeg upbringing and my recent arrival to Alberta in order to gauge the audiences' reaction to this reality. Most of the time the response was either welcoming or indifferent. However, the reaction in the press was somewhat more telling. For example, on September 24, 1999 the Edmonton Sun read:

> "Not since the Red Scare have we been invaded by such a subversive element. I refer to Winnipeg folk artists like...Joel Kroeker..."

Six days later SEE Magazine (in Edmonton) stated:

> "Edmonton's biggest import has to be quirky male Singer/Songwriters...now Joel Kroeker has immigrated from Winnipeg to be part of the Edmonton scene. Are the career opportunities so much better here?"

Comments like these revealed an insecurity about the solidity of the Edmonton scene. That is, it seemed as if those who considered themselves part of the scene were afraid that "out of towners" such as myself would somehow take gigs from artists who were actually from Edmonton. It was only after the Best New Artist award was given that I actually felt welcomed as part of the scene. This situation seems to imply an underlying sense of community or connected-ness that exists within this Edmonton scene. This implication comes not only from the fact that many considered me "part of the scene" without me knowing it, but that I presented a threat of some sort to the established scene itself.

The most significant activity where image articulation and status seeking comes into play for me on a day to day basis is in booking gigs. I spend many hours per week on the telephone trying to convince potential buyers that I am "worthy" of performing their room. This is done after sending a press kit (includes a CD, Bio, pictures, recent press and a sappy sweet cover letter) and calling repeatedly to make sure they have opened the envelope, listened to the disc, liked it and have an opening at just the right time that I am passing through their territory on tour. This is where the issue of professional versus semi-professional status becomes important. The buyer must be convinced that I am a professional at all levels including performance level (i.e. I will sound great no matter what) and commitment level (i.e. I will show up for the gig).

I have found the complexity regarding the issue of the Singer/Songwriter's liminality between folk and pop genres to be a benefit. It has allowed me the freedom to adjust to specific situations and venues in order to play for and appeal to a wider

spectrum of listeners. Performing in a wide variety of contexts has also given me a relatively diverse palette of experiences to draw upon as I develop as a creator and performer of original music.